

TOP STORY: THE NEW, IMPROVED TEAMSTERS

September 20 - October 3, 1993

IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

PUBLIC
ENEMY

#1.

Should we
blame
Hollywood
for our
violent
ways?

MEDIA
VIOLENCE

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MIKE MALES, page 14 PAT AUFDERHEIDE, page 17

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E D I T O R I A L

A WELCOME FIRST STEP TO PEACE

In November of 1988, we wrote: "For several years, Yasser Arafat and other moderate leaders of the PLO have indicated that they would recognize Israel and coexist with it peacefully, if Israel would reciprocate by agreeing to meet with the Palestinians and negotiate a two-state solution to their hostilities." But a succession of Israeli governments had refused these overtures. Despite mounting evidence to the contrary, Israel "branded Palestinian attempts at a peaceful solution to their 40-year war as a subterfuge designed to mask the PLO's continuing commitment to the destruction of the Israeli state," we observed.

At that time, as we had on many previous occasions, we called on Israel and the United States to recognize the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. We argued that, in exchange for peace, Israel should give up territories seized in the 1967 war.

We contended that the *intifada*, which began in late 1987, had made it clear to all but the most hard-line Israeli expansionists (and the Jewish establishment in the U.S.) that Palestinians saw the PLO as their only legitimate representatives, and that the essentially non-violent, highly disciplined nature of the *intifada* "obviated the need for the kind of terrorist actions favored by the PLO's rejectionist wing."

The Israeli-PLO agreement starts a process that could lead to a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank.

As we saw it, the *intifada* was the final proof that there was no way to bring peace to the Mideast without accepting Palestinian self-determination on the West Bank and Gaza. Unfortunately, though predictably, Israel's Likud government ignored the writing on the wall, accelerated Israeli settlement on the West Bank and Gaza and escalated its own terrorist activity against Palestinians. The result was four more years of misery and suffering in the territories and uncertainty and tension in Israel.

In Israel this finally led to the election of a Labor government willing to exchange land for peace. And now we have an agreement to create a process that can bring security without perpetual war to Israel and an independent state to the Palestinians.

This agreement is, of course, only a first step, and as such it leaves many questions unanswered. But it does set forth general principles that make possible the satisfaction of Palestinian desires. The plan calls for the establishment of an elected interim Palestinian council covering Gaza and the West Bank "for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338."

Pending the inauguration of the council, the PLO will have authority over Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho in regard to education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism. More basic issues, including the status of Jerusalem, refugees, Israeli settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with neighboring states, will be negotiated as quickly as possible.

Palestinians will also have a "strong police force" in order to "guarantee public order and internal security," while Israel will remain responsible for defending against external threats, at least during the five-year interim period. In short, a degree of autonomy has been granted to the Palestinians by this agreement and a process has begun under which they can begin building the political infrastructure for a state of their own.

On the other hand, many Israelis are still adamantly opposed to such an outcome. On the fringe right, expansionists still hope for a "Greater Israel." Others, both in Israel and the U.S., have been brainwashed by decades of propaganda about Palestinian "terrorism." Their fear is genuine, but it is unlikely that it can survive five years of a transition in which Palestinians turn their attention to peaceful self-government while tensions—and violent incidents—ease off.

Given good will and a commitment to the stated goals of this agreement by both sides, it seems likely that an autonomous Palestinian state will emerge at the end of this process.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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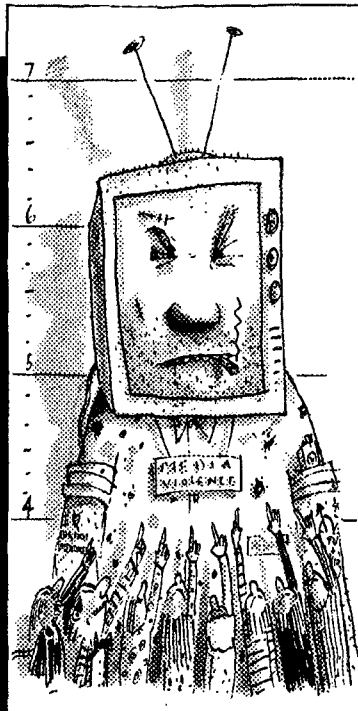


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LETTERS

Ongoing plague

Since your article covering the high-level radioactive waste storage problem was published (Aug. 9), troubling developments have continued to plague Consumers Power's Palisades reactor. On June 15, a control rod stuck to the head of the reactor vessel when the reactor was opened. On July 6, in a similar event, a used fuel assembly stuck to the head of the reactor vessel. Both these events are relatively rare. But the rarest and most troubling incident occurred on July 1 when Consumers Power found a highly radioactive broken fuel rod lying near the reactor vessel. This is not something that can be easily overlooked; standing three feet away, a 10-second dose to a person is likely to be fatal. The compa-

ny continues to search for the missing fuel pellets within the reactor.

The broken fuel rod highlights faulty operating practices by Consumers Power and why the VSC-24 container is such a bad idea. The broken fuel rod had been in the reactor for five cycles, going on six. Standard operating practice in the industry is three cycles or about three years. But in order to slow down the embrittlement and aging process of the reactor vessel, Consumers Power was using this heavily irradiated fuel as a neutron shield within the reactor. In so doing, the tubing in which the fuel is encased became brittle and shattered during handling. Similar easily shattered tubing may have been placed in the VSC-24 storage cask. While in storage for the next 20, 40 or more years, the high

internal temperatures are likely to weaken the fuel tubing even further, thereby eliminating one barrier to the environment. Temperatures in the VSC-24 are so high because the company insists on loading too much fuel into a container that does not readily dissipate heat. This is truly false economy, since the VSC-24 cask is relatively inexpensive compared to the capital and operating costs of a reactor.

The bottom line is that Consumers Power, with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's blessing, has turned what should have been a relatively safe storage technology into a serious safety problem that will affect local Michigan residents and all persons along future transportation routes.

Marvin Resnikoff
Radioactive Waste
Management Associates
New York

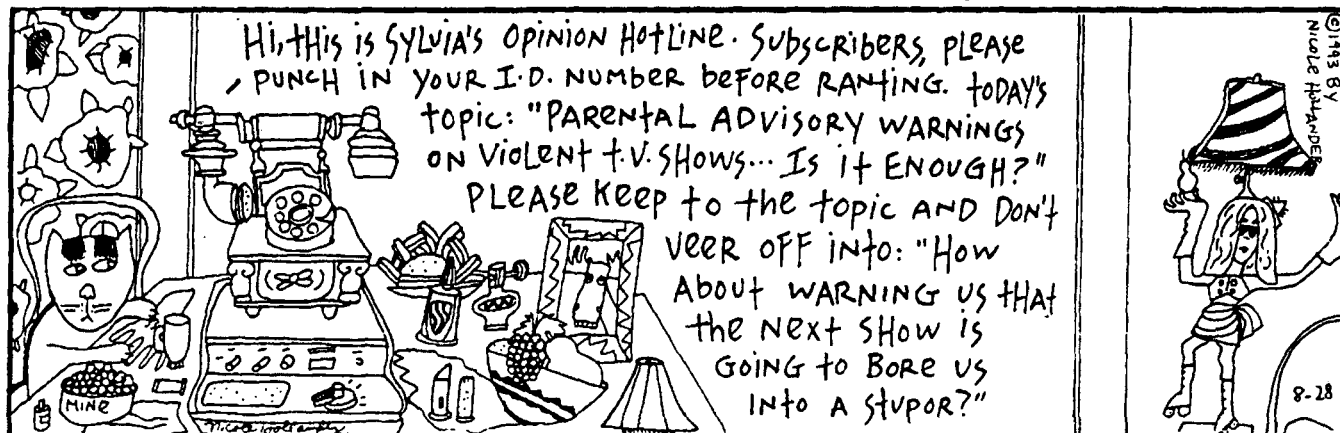
Radioactive Waste Management Associates serves as technical consultants to the Lake Michigan Federation on the Palisades and Point Beach reactors, and to the Mdewakanton Sioux on the Prairie Island reactors.

Beating the war drums?

Why does *In These Times* continue to beat the drum to get gays into the military? Your crusade should be to get heterosexuals out of the military. If progressive thinkers believe nations

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



should find better ways of solving conflicts other than war, it seems inconsistent to encourage anyone to join the military.

Maybe you should devote more space to strategies as to how a military-free world can be created. Perhaps we really don't believe this is possible.

Carl V. Archambeau
Grand Ledge, Mich.

Clinton and the sister

Salim Muwakkil's piece "Faith no more" (ITT, July 12) raised some good points about Bill Clinton's response to the concerns of black Americans. Clinton has committed some incredible gaffes in his first eight months in office (e.g., the Guinier nomination, Haitian immigration, as well as backpedaling on the budget and the deficit).

But I disagree with Muwakkil's criticism of Clinton for "dissing" Sister Souljah. I couldn't agree more with Clinton's criticism of Souljah's line about it being time for "blacks to stop killing blacks and kill some whites instead." He was absolutely right to denounce this as a "reverse-KKK" mentality. If Clinton's intent was to undermine Jesse Jackson, then Jackson is at fault for being foolish enough to present such an easy target.

If the future of America depends on the likes of Sister Souljah or David Duke, we're in deep trouble.

Christopher M. Richgels
Roseville, Calif.

Appalled!

Woody Igou should know better than to take what he reads in the *New York Times* at face value ("Appall-O-Meter," ITT, Aug. 9).

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA) is one of Washington's sleaziest lobbies. The PMA's member companies engage in price-gouging and unethical marketing, and they pollute like crazy. But why should



In These Times care who organized the Coalition for Equal Access to Medicines?

The fact of the matter is that poor people, minorities and public health advocates were willing to participate in the coalition because they need medicine, and the only way for them to get it is to preserve and expand Medicaid drug benefits. I thought that one of the most important skills for grass-roots organizing was "coalition-building." Why criticize people for trying to build a coalition with a rich and powerful organization?

Come the revolution, the drug companies will be under the heel of a single-payer system, and access to politicians won't depend on the size of the checks you write to campaigns. But the revolution ain't come yet, and that's how Washington politics is played. The Coalition for Equal Access to Medicines isn't "like the spontaneous generation of maggots out of spoiled meat"; it's a happy coincidence of interests between this nation's most vulnerable people and a group of its wealthiest and most powerful.

To the corporate media, poor people are the dreaded "special interests" whose "entitlements" are causing the budget crisis. They're also incapable of acting for themselves, so when they

link up with the PMA they must be dupes in some sleazy scheme. I expect the *New York Times* to disparage any efforts by poor people to fight for what they need from government. I don't expect a magazine that purports to speak for justice and the downtrodden to join the assault. Give yourself a 10, I'm appalled.

John Canham-Clyne
Washington

Correction:

Curses! In his review last issue of *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, Ilan Stavans noted that "the philosopher's life after death has been as cursed as was his stay on this earth." An alert reader and Peirce scholar, Felicia E. Kruse, points out that editorial demons have "unfortunately perpetuated the curse by using the common misspelling 'Pierce.'" We apologize to Ms. Kruse, to our readers—and to the ghost of Charles Sanders Peirce.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

InSHORT



AGAINST THE TIDE

An independent Japanese labor movement grows

But representatives of Japan's independent labor federation, Zenroren, who visited San Francisco, New York and Pittsburgh this summer, warn that the world has been sold a bill of goods regarding the supposedly idyllic condition of Japanese worklife.

Those who imagine that obstacles to organizing unions in the United States are uniquely horrible should hear Zenroren officials tell the story of a group

Everyone from the *Wall Street Journal* to current Labor Secretary Robert Reich has been trumpeting "Japanese-style labor-management relations" as the cure for everything from U.S. employee absenteeism to America's general economic malaise.



Cancer, no biggie

Environmentalists claim that in the "sunburn alert" issued by the Environmental Protection Agency on August



13, NASA scientists purposely low-keyed the human health risks posed by a decreased

ozone layer. A government official conceded that the approach was in response to criticism by right-wing activists who have objected to preliminary ozone findings in the past. NASA took this approach although the ozone layer is "the lowest we've ever seen."

Don't worry, your skin and the Mars Probe are both in good hands.

Outback in the Stone Age

Authorities in Perth, Australia, have closed a restaurant



where topless women serve as plates for its customers. The diners were invited to eat

fruit salad and cream off the stomach of their waitress.

The great Aussie advance: not women as mere objects, but as utilitarian objects.

A flock without frocks

Pentecostal preacher Sammy Rodriguez pleaded guilty to misdemeanor traffic charges



in Louisiana after crashing a carload of naked worshippers into a tree. The preacher

and 19 of his followers removed their clothes on a pilgrimage from Texas. They reported that God had told the group to leave their clothes behind.

And leave the driving to Him.

Fermentation rhapsody

A Japanese manufacturer believes the taste of noodles can be enhanced by playing Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons"



while its noodles are drying. The company theorizes that the enzyme and yeast fun-

gus activity becomes livelier at the sound of classical music. Taste tests have allegedly shown improved flavor with the process.

More evidence that the audience for classical music continues to shrink.

Stunned by a stupid statement? Nauseated by a noxious news item? Livid about a ludicrous lie? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, In These Times 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. He co, Pol Pot?
10. Horseperson of the Apocalypse

of Nissan workers who voted to unionize in 1965, but were not granted recognition until 27 years later. Pervasive myths concerning the job security of Japanese workers explode in the face of statistics indicating more than 1 million layoffs in the most recent recession, while 2.5 million workers are employed by some 30,000 Japanese companies at plants in Southeast Asia. Wages in these "Asian *maquiladoras*" range from one-tenth to one-fourth of the wage levels prevailing in Japan.

Norihisa Motono, secretary of Zenroren, claims that the conditions of Japanese workers cannot be understood apart from the impact of the pervasive corruption that recently led to the historic first defeat of Japan's long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Motono and Nobuhiro Huijiyoshi of the Japanese Labor Research Institute argue that the current crisis of Japanese politics has been misreported in both Japan and the United States. Despite the attempt of Japan's rulers to portray to the world an image of social "harmony," Huijiyoshi says that opposition to the current system is organized and growing. "There is a united front of various strata, including honest factions of the opposition parties (especially the Communists and Socialists), Zenroren, women's organizations, farmers and merchants," he observes. "Together they have created the Progressive Forum, which has 4.5 million members and is utterly opposed to the government's economic and political policies."

Huijiyoshi says the movement is influential, and the pressure it brought to bear in the wake of the Kanemaru bribery scandal was partly responsible for the dissolution of the Diet, which forced new elections. Demonstrations of more than 100,000 each day outside the Japanese Parliament went routinely unreported in the Japanese media but were a significant factor in swaying the LDP's parliamentary fence-sitters to vote against the government.

Zenroren is one of Japan's two "trade union centers," both of which were founded in 1989. One center, Rengo, which represents 8 million workers, Motono describes as "collaborationist" and "militarist." He charges Rengo with acquiescing in the LDP cutbacks in social welfare and education during the '80s, policies he derides as "Japanese Reaganomics."

The 2 million-member Zenroren, by contrast, is independent of capital, the political parties and the government. "Zenroren was founded to defend peace, democracy and workers' rights," says Motono. "Trade unions should unite workers of all beliefs and put forward programs on which all workers agree."

In Pittsburgh, Huijiyoshi and Motono were hosted by the United Electrical Workers (UE). They met with representatives from a number of other U.S. unions, warning their American counterparts against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). "If the U.S. labor movement goes along with NAFTA, it will wither," argues Huijiyoshi. "It is important to develop the international labor movement to control the arbitrary practices of multinational corporations in the global workplace."

Motono notes the lack of contact between U.S. and Japanese labor, and confesses to having been a prisoner of a provincial and limited viewpoint. "Frankly, I was not interested in the U.S. trade union movement, but I was very interested in U.S.-Japanese relations," he says. His attitude changed after he listened to Ed Bruno, who was then UE's director of organizing and who went to Japan in 1991 to participate in a conference on Japanese-style industrial relations. Motono says, "I realized that workers in Japan and the United States have similar problems."

—Fred Gustafson

NUCLEAR TREMORS

On the brink of an arms race in Asia

While most nations in the region seem more preoccupied with making money than war, there are disturbing signs of an emerging Asian arms race.

Temperatures in Tokyo and Seoul rose sharply this spring with reports that North Korea fired a trial missile—known as the “Rodong-1” and capable of carrying a nuclear warhead—into the Sea of Japan. The new missile, along with North Korea’s restrictions on inspections of its nuclear facilities and its earlier threat to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), has left many Asians, particularly the Japanese, worried about the possible threat of a nuclear-equipped enemy unnervingly close to home.

It’s not only North Korea that is causing heartburn in the region. Speculation that Japan would soon go nuclear was fueled this summer, when Japan equivocated on whether to agree to an extension of the NPT. And China, while long a nuclear power, is undergoing a dramatic modernization of its forces as well, upgrading its advanced technology and importing scientific talent and hardware from Russia.

These developments send shudders throughout the region. According to Paul Leventhal of the Nuclear Control Institute, a non-profit research organization in Washington dedicated to monitoring nuclear proliferation and terrorism, “Asia is the most volatile region of the world right now, even more than the Middle East, because of how quickly it is becoming nuclearized.”

Over the summer, Japan—which has kept itself free of nuclear weaponry since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—has been conducting an urgent, intensive review of its non-nuclear policy. The new government of Japan, headed by Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, just announced Japan’s intention to recommit to the NPT—but many analysts are skeptical about the long term. Japan and the U.S. are preparing to enter negotiations regarding the transfer of sophisticated antimissile technology, designed to defend Japan’s borders from the Rodong-1. But a long-term decision to go nuclear may be inevitable.

While many analysts agree on the potential dangers of an Asian arms race, they disagree both over the extent of the danger and over who exactly is to blame. Analyst David Kay—a veteran of the Scud hunts in Iraq—argues that “what the North Koreans are doing is really frightening. This has already caused a serious escalation of the arms race in the region. A nuclear Japan and South Korea may be a fait accompli.”

According to Kay, Japan is poised only six months away from nuclear capability at any given moment. With an extensive plutonium reprocessing program, they not only have the technological sophistication but the fuel to quickly join the nuclear superpower club. Similarly, South Korea may be only a couple of years away from the Bomb.

Some analysts, though, such as Leventhal, think Japan’s nuclear reprocessing program is the most destabilizing factor in the region. Leventhal notes that within a decade or two “Japan could have more plutonium than in the entire U.S. arsenal.” This is a dismaying prospect for many Asians, Leventhal argues. “They don’t understand why Japan needs a superpower quantity of plutonium for peaceful purposes. They know that its peaceful use cannot be guaranteed.”

“Sheer hype,” says a senior U.S. official who spoke on background, regarding the world-views of Kay and Leventhal. “And, given the ongoing negotiations with North Korea, it is also irresponsible. We don’t know the

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Turned off

After decades of hemming and hawing on the subject of TV violence, legislators are now furiously proposing bills to control it. Among the eight proposals so far: having the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) set standards, installing a “V-chip” that would automatically shut off TV sets before a violent show, setting up an 800 number for angry parents to complain, and mandating warning labels. Lawmakers will have to walk a line between violating freedom of expression and being ineffectual. Nonetheless, there’s solid support in Congress for some legal action.

More is less

Now that CBS—the last holdout—has struck a deal with cable companies, a new and even more vertically integrated TV era has finally begun.

From cable’s origins in the ‘50s, cable operators have carried broadcast programming to cable viewers. In fact, the broadcast stations were always the most popular channels on cable. The broadcasters traditionally did not charge cable operators for the transmissions. But in recent years, broadcasters have begun to demand payment, and federal legislation passed last year requires cablers to compensate broadcasters for their programming. In ensuing negotiations, cablers refused flat out to pay broadcasters cash. In the end, though, each of the networks, one by one,

has agreed (more or less reluctantly) to launch a new cable channel in cooperation with a cable company. This sudden alliance may generate more programming and so expand viewers' options. But the deals do not typically guarantee the new programming a spot on cablers' tightly held menus of channels. So it's not clear whether the fledgling ventures will even get a large enough audience to succeed. The new alliances also further centralize the control of a few cable companies over the TV universe.

Captive audiences

Chris Whittle, who brought us Channel One—lite TV news with commercials in the public schools—and was talking about setting up a national private school franchise, is having financial troubles. Investors seem willing to leave education in the hands of the taxpayers, and he's turned his Edison Project into a partnership with public schools. Meanwhile, as he told *Advertising Age*, he hasn't lost sight of his goal to make money through media in "industrial and professional sectors and education sectors." Watch for him in jail, in school, at work.

And they mean it

The FCC has sent the signal that it means to enforce the Children's Television Act of 1990—recently dishing out \$15,000 fines for three TV stations that aired more commercials than are now legal during children's programming. One station begged off on the grounds of being new to broadcasting, but the FCC didn't buy the argument.

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outcome of the negotiations, and to predict they will fail before they are over is not right."

This senior official, who asked not to be identified, acknowledges that Japan had reason to have a "heightened case of nerves." But he disagrees that these tremors will necessarily call for a nuclear fix. He does not dispute, however, that Japan is reviewing its defensive needs. "All you need to do is look at your wristwatch to know how close at any given moment Japan is to a nuclear bomb," he notes. "Of course they have the technological sophistication to [build one]. But that isn't the issue. The issue is the will, and I don't think there is the popular support or the will to go nuclear." Publicly, though, the U.S. government, which is handling negotiations with North Korea, does not deny the threat of an Asian arms race.

So what are the options for the U.S.? Kay believes that the worst thing the U.S. could do at this moment would be to reintroduce U.S. tactical nukes into South Korea as a deterrent. "If you do," he says, "then that only reinforces the perception ... that in the end only nuclear weapons provide security." And while Kay believes that North Korean nuclear capability, however crude, does change the strategic balance, he argues that at the real issue "is not North Korea but the reaction in Japan and South Korea." Even though the CIA acknowledges that North Korea may have enough processed fuel to equip one small nuke, other U.S. officials are convinced that it does not yet possess a bomb. This is one reason the U.S. is negotiating so furiously.

But the U.S. is also operating on the assumption that what North Korea really wants is economic power, and that the nuclear card is only a means employed to end its economic isolation. Certainly North Korea has received more attention and, in some perverse way, more respect since the initial announcement last March of their intent to withdraw from the NPT. Whether that is the bottom-line lesson for both Japan and South Korea remains to be seen. What is certain is that North Korea's truculence regarding intrusive inspections of its nuclear program, like the nuclear tremors elsewhere in Japan and China, heightens a pervasive sense of insecurity throughout the region.

—April Oliver

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid

The Courage To Chain



ETC.

By Beate Sissenich

Frayed safety net

Unless Congress takes action in the next couple of weeks, several hundred thousand long-term unemployed workers may face dire economic hardship. The federal emergency unemployment compensation (EUC), enacted in 1991, is due to expire on October 2.

The EUC assists the approximately quarter-million people per month whose regular unemployment benefits have expired. It provides up to 26 weeks of additional assistance through federal funds.

A new study by the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that long-term unemployment (i.e. unemployment lasting over six months) is lingering, despite other signs of economic recovery. There were 1.74 million long-term jobless in August 1993, compared to 1.1 million during an average month in 1991.

If EUC expires as scheduled, only eight states would currently qualify for the federal-state extended benefits (EB) program, which provides up to 13 additional weeks of benefits. The EB requires states to have an average unemployment rate in the most recent three-month period of at least 6.5 percent. This rate must also be at least 10 percent higher than in the same three months of either of the two previous years.

Due to these extremely narrow criteria, however, states with chronically weak

I N P E R S O N



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LOVING THE SINNER

Bill Pelke's inspiring story of murder and forgiveness

four teenage girls who had asked if they could come in to talk about the Bible. Pelke says it's the only way they would have gotten in. His grandmother could never pass up an opportunity to do one more thing for Jesus. One of the girls, Paula Cooper, stabbed her 33 times.

On July 11, 1986, Paula Cooper, 15, was sentenced to death under an Indiana law that allowed children as young as 10 to be executed.

Around the time of the trial, people would often approach Pelke and say, by way of comfort, "I hope the bitch burns in hell." To which Pelke would shrug.

Bill Pelke has told his story so many times it's become an incantation.

On May 14, 1985, his 78-year-old grandmother was brutally murdered in her home in Gary, Ind., by

economies may not qualify, according to the study. Among those states are West Virginia, whose unemployment rate was 10 percent in July, and New York, which had a 7.8 percent rate of unemployment in June. And since the EB program is funded by the federal government and the states at equal shares, each state has to enact legislation that adopts the EB criteria. So far, the vast majority of states have failed to do so, and most legislatures have adjourned for the year. Furthermore, many states' unemployment trust funds are nearly depleted. Options facing Congress, as suggested by the study, include temporarily extending EUC past October 2 but limiting it to states with unemployment rates of 6.5 percent or more. Another approach would be to revise the EB program by increasing the federal matching rate from 50 percent to 75 percent and easing criteria for states to qualify. But Iris Lav, co-author of the Center's analysis, views the chances of Congress enacting such reforms with pessimism: "Extending the EUC program will be difficult because when it was established in 1991, it was done under emergency designation. Even in view of the urgency of the Midwest flood this year, Congress went through a long struggle before approving emergency funds." The alternative, however, would be to send hundreds of thousands into a downward spiral of poverty.

By the end of October, Pelke found himself falling back upon a habit of prayer that he had put aside since 1978, when he left Bible college. Broken-hearted, he would sit up in the crane he operated at the Bethlehem Steel mill in Burns Harbor, Ind., where he has worked for 27 years, running over and over the pain and regrets: Vietnam, a divorce, a bankruptcy, the murder of his grandmother, and now trouble with his long-term girlfriend Judy.

After three weeks of prayer, on November 2, late at night, up in his crane, he had the revelation that he says changed his life forever. In his mind's eye, he saw Paula crouched, terrified and remorseful, in her cell. His grandmother appeared to him as she was in the photograph that had been printed over and over in the newspaper, but with tears running down her face.

Says Pelke, "I became convinced that my grandmother would have had love and compassion for this girl and her family." And he knew, "beyond the shadow of a doubt," that his grandmother would have wanted him, on her behalf, to have that same love and compassion. But he felt none, and for that he despaired, until he realized that he didn't have to try to forgive her, because that was God's job, and if Paula asked God for forgiveness it would be granted.

After this midnight vision, Pelke began to publicly call for the commutation of Paula's death sentence and, eventually, for the abolition of capital punishment. He points out that Paula and every single one of the 33 juveniles on death row with her had been a victim of child abuse. Refused permission to see Paula, he began to write her. So far they have exchanged more than 200 letters.

No one in Pelke's own family has been tempted to join his cause. "You're fucking nuts," he was told by Judy, with whom he was trying to reconcile and would later marry. The U.S. press, too, turned a deaf ear to Pelke's crusade until he appeared by invitation on television in Italy, where Paula's case had become a cause célèbre.

Judy brings out his scrapbooks, in which he has pasted the clippings in English and Italian that tell Paula's story and his own, each dated on the bottom in his careful script. The scrapbooks record the eventual victory of the appeal—Paula's death sentence was commuted to 60 years, with release possible in half that time.

Pelke still works 12-hour shifts at the mill, but now he spends his other waking hours organizing Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR), a small but growing national organization devoted to the abolition of the death penalty. There are 100 members, most of whom have joined over the last few years, although the organization was established in 1978. The group's newsletter, "Voice of Love and Compassion and Forgiveness," is published out of Pelke's home. And he hosted half of the steering committee meetings for the Journey of Hope, a two-week tour this past June by MVFR to spread their message throughout the Midwest.

"Part of what we do is to tell our stories," says Pelke.

Pelke knows the power of those stories—each one a grim tale of murder and mayhem, almost unendurable loss and, ultimately, miraculous healing and peace through faith, love and compassion for all humanity.

"We're to love the sinner," he says. "We're to love a Paula Cooper, a John Wayne Gacy, a Richard Speck, a Jeffrey Dahmer."

Finally, he says, "It's not something that can be taken back. If executing Paula would have brought my grandmother back..."

—Susan Kimmelman

T H E F I R S T S T O N E

PR spies

By Joel Bleifuss

The public relations (PR) industry, long adept at sticking happy faces on unpleasant realities, has in recent years taken the stage as a player-for-hire on the national, state and local political scene. As part of their new political gamesmanship, PR flacks have appropriated the covert arts of the intelligence community.

On the cutting edge of this phenomenon of flack-as-political-spy are the 14 PR professionals who work at the Washington firm Mongoven, Biscoe and Duchin (MBD).

MBD was founded in 1988 by the firm's current president John Mongoven. From 1978-1981, Mongoven served as deputy director of communications for the Republican National Committee. From there, he went to work for Nestlé, defending the company's marketing of infant formula—a sales strategy that indirectly resulted in the death of an untold number of Third World babies.

MBD publicly describes itself as a company “specializing in the resolution of public policy conflicts between corporations and activist groups.” However, MBD marketing literature that *In These Times* obtained over the transom lays bare this claim. What the company really provides is “issue intelligence” for corporate America.

“We understand the role of activism in the public policy process,” MBD boasts, “and have successfully helped clients achieve ethical and lasting solutions to, or at least minimize the consequences of, problems caused by organizations, leaders and opinion molders in these sectors of society.” MBD provides such help by preparing “comprehensive strategic plans” to counter “organizations which seek policy changes in opposition to our clients’ interests.” To that end, MBD “maintains extensive files on organizations and their leadership (all from public sources).”

The company routinely “monitors” 66 subjects, including “the South African issue/all phases,” “polystyrene” and “consumer groups.” MBD’s promotional package lists

20 tasks that the company performs. These include reviewing lists of those registered to attend annual stockholders’ meetings, suggesting particular “individuals from the environmental community as candidates for corporate boards of directors” and “analyz[ing] grant proposals from public interest groups to corporate foundations.” In short, MBD’s PR professionals, files in hand, sort through the public policy community, cultivating those who pose no threat and weeding out those who “would affect [the client’s] interests adversely.”

MBD co-founder and vice president Ronald Duchin is particularly concerned about the adverse effects of the more than 11,000 grass-roots environmental organizations that he says operate in the United States. According to Duchin, many of these groups have a “commitment to a

radical change in the way America governs itself.” Duchin, a graduate of the U.S. Army War College, served as a special assistant to the Secretary of Defense from 1981-84. A directory of public relations executives lists Duchin’s area of expertise as “issue management.”

In a speech to the 1991 National Cattleman’s Association titled: “Take an Activist Apart and What Do You Have?” Duchin separated activists into four different categories: opportunists, idealists, realists and radicals.

Opportunists “exploit issues for their own personal agenda,” he explained. Idealists “apply an ethical and moral standard” and are usually “naive.” Realists, though, are “willing to work within the system” and are “not interested in radical change.” They “should always receive the highest priority in any strategy dealing with a public policy issue,” Duchin told his audience. “In most issues, it is the solution agreed upon by the realists which becomes the accepted solution, especially when business participates in the decision-making process.”

The radicals, by contrast, “see multinational corporations as inherently evil” and “want to change the system.” The best way to deal with radicals, Duchin contended, is to form an alliance with the realists and then co-opt the idealists. The opportunists will then jump on board, leaving the radicals isolated. This tactic works best between the time that “a radical group begins to push an issue and when the issue becomes accepted by credible groups.” If corporations wait too long, they will lose “control” over how the issue is framed, and may wind up facing legislation they do not like.

MBD has spent this past summer trying to “control” public policy decisions regarding bovine growth hormone. The St. Louis-based chemical company Monsanto and the tobacco-food conglomerate Philip Morris, whose subsidiaries include Kraft General Foods and Oscar

Mayer, have both hired MBD to help ensure that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) puts its stamp of approval on bovine growth hormone. Internal MBD memos, leaked by industry sources and obtained by *In These Times*, provide some details of this MBD operation.

When injected into dairy cows, the growth hormone (known as BST) causes a 10 to 25 percent increase in milk production. FDA approval of the hormone would mean higher profits for Monsanto, which has invested tens of millions in developing the hormone. The use of the hormone would also increase the supply of milk, thereby leading to lower milk prices that would benefit Philip Morris subsidiary Kraft—which buys or sells about half the cheese produced in the U.S. These lower milk prices would be less welcome to small-scale milk producers, and could drive many family dairy farms out of business. And, as I explained in my column of May 3, the hormone could well pose risks to the milk-drinking public.

To help ensure that the growth hormone sails through the regulatory process, MBD's intelligence operation has targeted John Stauber, a consultant to the Foundation on Economic Trends, an organization founded by biotechnology critic Jeremy Rifkin. For the past five years Stauber, a Wisconsin native, has been helping dairy farmers organize against FDA approval of bovine growth hormone.

Last May, Stauber got a call from Kara Zeigler, who identified herself as being with MBD public affairs. Stauber recalled, "I am one of the few people to whom MBD would have meant anything, and so rather than tell her, 'Look, I know who you work for and I have nothing to say,' I strung her along, and gave her a combination of public information and BS. I tried to find out what she knew and what she was up to, so I played a little game of spy versus spy."

A few days later Stauber received, from an anonymous industry source, memos that MBD's Mongoven had written to Kraft General Food's Deborah Becker. In a May 10 memo, Mongoven wrote, "On the issue of labeling milk from cows treated with BST ... it appears that proponents of labeling failed to make their case. It appears that, barring direct action by Congress, FDA will approve BST for sale in the near future." Attached to Mongoven's memo was Zeigler's eight-page intelligence report on a May 6 FDA hearing on bovine growth hormone, in which Zeigler quoted from conversations between FDA panelists that she had "overheard."

Another Mongoven memo to Becker, dated May 18, passed on some of the BS that Stauber had fed Zeigler days earlier. Mongoven wrote, "The 'gorilla [sic] campaign' will target major dairies and grocery stores that have not pledged to be 'BGH [bovine growth hormone] free.'" Becker subsequently sent this memo to 47 Philip Morris/Kraft insiders.

Last month, Stauber found out that Zeigler had been mining for information about the growth hormone issue with Francis Goodman, a Wisconsin dairy farmer activist (who was under the impression that Zeigler was a writer for *Z* magazine), Michael Hansen, a scientist at Consumers Union (who thought she was a friend of Goodman), and an aide to U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold (who didn't know whom Zeigler was representing). MBD was concerned about Feingold's successful attempts to add language to the 1994 budget bill that would mandate a moratorium on bovine growth hormone sales during a 90-day period that would begin if and when the FDA approves the drug.

MBD has cause for concern. Those 90 days just might be enough time for "radical" ideas about bovine growth hormone to become "accepted by credible groups."

Next issue: Is it grass roots or is it astroturf? Only the PR industry knows for sure.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan





Public Enemy number one?

Forget about poverty, racism, child abuse, domestic violence, rape. America, from Michael Medved to *Mother Jones*, has discovered the real cause of our country's rising violence: television mayhem, Guns N' Roses, Ice-T and Freddy Krueger.

*Media
violence
accounts for,
at most, a
small fraction
of violence in
society.*

By Mike Males

No need for family support policies, justice system reforms or grappling with such distressing issues as poverty and sexual violence against the young. Today's top social policy priorities, it seems, are TV lockout gizmos, voluntary restraint, program labeling and (since everyone agrees these strategies won't work) congressionally supervised censorship. Just when earnest national soul-searching over the epidemic violence of contemporary America seemed unavoidable, that traditional scapegoat—

media depravity—is topping the ratings again.

What caused four youths to go on a "reign of terror" of beating, burning and killing in a New York City park in August 1954? Why, declared U.S. Sen. Robert Hendrickson, chair of the Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee, the ringleader was found to have a "horror comic" on his person—proof of the "dangers inherent in the multi-million copy spate of lurid comic books that are placed upon the newsstands each month."

And what caused four youths to go on a brutal "wilding" spree, nearly killing a jogger in a New York City park in May 1989? Why, Tipper Gore wrote in *Newsweek*, the leader was humming the rap ditty "Wild Thing" after his arrest. Enough said.

Today, media violence scapegoating is not just the crusade of censorious conservatives and priggish preachers, but also of those of progressive stripe—from Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) and Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) to *Mother Jones* and columnist Ellen Goodman. "The average American child," Goodman

writes, "sees 8,000 murders and 10,000 acts of violence on television before he or she is out of grammar school." Goodman, like most pundits, expends far more outrage on the sins of TV and rock 'n' roll than on the rapes and violent abuses millions of American children experience before they are out of grammar school.

The campaign is particularly craven in its efforts to confine the debate to TV's effects on children and adolescents even though the research claims that adults are similarly affected. But no politician wants to tell voters they can't see *Terminator II* because it might incite grownups to mayhem.

Popular perceptions aside, the most convincing research, found in massive, multi-national correlational studies of thousands of people, suggests that, at most, media violence accounts for 1 to 5 percent of all violence in society. For example, a 1984 study led by media-violence expert Rowell Huesmann of 1,500 youth in the U.S., Finland, Poland and Australia, found that the amount of media violence watched is associated with about 5 percent of the the violence in children, as rated by peers. Other correlational studies have found similarly small effects.

But the biggest question media-violence critics can't answer is the most fundamental one: is it the *cause*, or simply one of the many *symptoms*, of this unquestionably brutal age? The best evidence does not exonerate celluloid savagery (who could?) but shows that it is a small, derivative influence compared to the real-life violence, both domestic and official, that our children face growing up in '80s and '90s America.

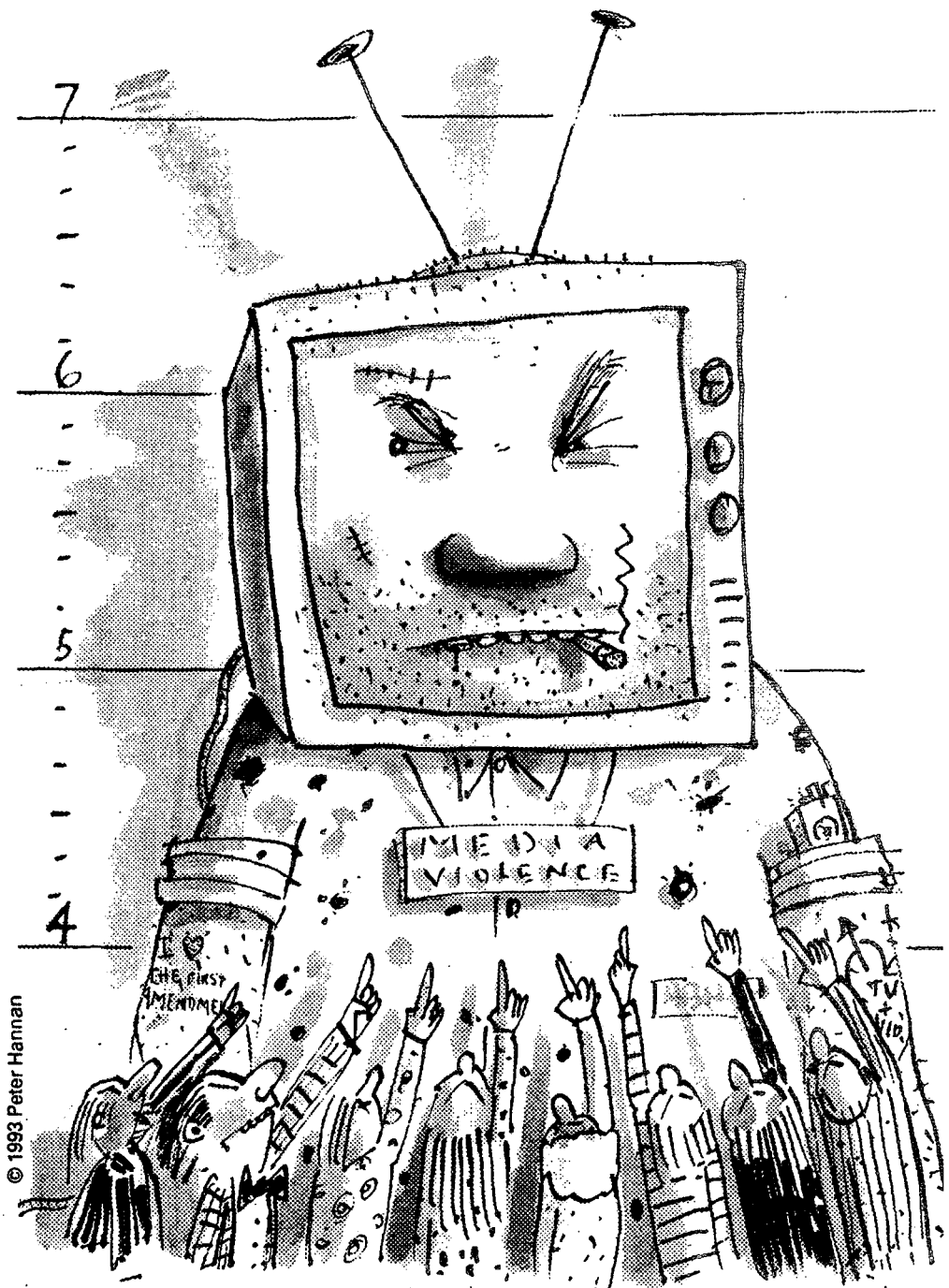
When it comes to the genuine causes of youth violence, it's hard to dismiss the 51 percent increase in youth poverty since 1973, 1 million rapes and a like number of violently injurious offenses inflicted upon the young every year, a juvenile justice system bent on retribution against poor and minority youth, and the abysmal neglect of the needs of young families. The Carter-Reagan-Bush eras added 4 million youths to the poverty rolls. The last 20 years have brought a record decline in youth well-being.

Despite claims that media violence is the best-researched social phenomenon in history, social science indexes show many times more studies of the effects of rape, violence and poverty on the young. Unlike the indirect methods of most media studies (questionnaires, interviews, peer ratings and laboratory vignettes), child abuse research includes the records of real-life criminals and their backgrounds. Unlike the media studies, the findings of this avalanche of research are consistent: child poverty, abuse and neglect underlie every major social problem the nation faces.

And, unlike the small correlations or temporary laboratory effects found in media research, abuse-violence studies produce powerful results: "Eighty-four percent of prison inmates were abused as children," the research agency Childhelp USA reports in a 1993 summary of major findings. Separate studies by the Minnesota State Prison, the Massachusetts Correctional Institute and the Massachusetts Treatment Center for Sexually Dangerous Persons (to cite a few) find histories of childhood abuse and neglect in 60 to 90 percent of the violent inmates studied—including virtually all death row prisoners. The most conservative study, that by the National Institute of Justice, indicates that some half-

million criminally violent offenses each year are the result of offenders being abused as children.

Two million American children are violently injured, sexually abused or neglected every year by adults whose age averages 32 years, according to the Denver-based American Humane Association. One million children and teenagers



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are raped every year, according to the 1992 federally funded *Rape in America* study of 4,000 women, which has been roundly ignored by the same media outlets that never seem short of space to berate violent rap lyrics.

Sensational articles in *Mother Jones* ("Proof That TV Makes Kids Violent"), *Newsweek* ("The Importance of Being Nasty") and *U.S. News and World Report* ("Fighting TV Violence") devoted pages to blaming music and media for violence—yet all three ignored this study of the rape of millions of America's children. CNN devoted less than a minute to the study; *Time* magazine gave it only three paragraphs.

In yet another relevant report, the California Department of Justice tabulated 1,600 murders in 1992 for which offenders' and victims' ages are known. It showed that half of all teenage murder victims, six out of seven children killed, and 80 percent of all adult murder victims were slain by adults over age 20, not by "kids." But don't expect any cover stories on "Poverty and Adult Violence: The Real Causes of Violent Youth," or "Grownups: Wild in the Homes." Politicians and pundits know who not to pick on.

Ron Harris' powerful August 1993 series in the *Los Angeles Times*—one of the few exceptions to the media myopia on youth violence—details the history of a decade of legal barbarism against youth in the Reagan and Bush years—which juvenile justice experts now link to the late '80s juvenile crime explosion. The inflammatory, punishment-oriented attitudes of these years led to a 50 percent increase in the number of youths behind bars. Youth typically serve sentences 60 percent longer than adults convicted for the same crimes. Today, two-thirds of all incarcerated youth are black, Latino, or Native American, up from less than half before 1985.

Ten years of a costly "get tough" approach to deter youth violence concluded with the highest rate of crime in the nation's history. Teenage violence, which had been declining from 1970 through 1983, doubled from 1983 through 1991. It is not surprising that the defenders of these policies should be casting around for a handy excuse for this policy disaster. TV violence is perfect for their purposes.

This is the sort of escapism liberals should be exposing. But too many shrink from frankly declaring that today's mushrooming violence is the predictable consequence of two decades of assault, economic and judicial, against the young. Now, increasingly, they point at Jason, 2 Live Crew, and *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*.

The insistence by such liberal columnists as Goodman and Coleman McCarthy that the evidence linking media violence to youth violence is on par with that linking smoking to lung cancer represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the difference between biological and psychological research. Psychology is not, despite its pretensions, a science. Research designs using human subjects are vulnerable to a bewildering array of confusing factors, many not even clear to researchers. The most serious (but

by no means only) weakness is the tendency by even the most conscientious researchers to influence subjects to produce the desired results. Thus the findings of psychological studies must be swallowed with large grains of salt.

Consider a few embarrassing problems with media violence research. First, many studies (particularly those done under more realistic "field conditions") show no increase in violence following exposure to violent media. In fact, a significant number of studies show no effect, or even decreased aggression. Even media-violence critic Huesmann has written that depriving children of violent shows may actually increase their violence.

Second, the definitions of just what constitutes media "violence," let alone what kind produces aggression in viewers, are frustratingly vague. Respected researchers J.

Singer and D. Singer found in a comprehensive 1986 study that "later aggressive behavior was predicted by earlier heavy viewing of public television's fast-paced *Sesame Street*." The Parent's Music Resource Center heartily endorsed the band U2 as "healthy and inspiring" for youth to listen to—yet U2's song "Pistol Weighing Heavy" was cited in psychiatric testimony as a key inspiration for the 1989 killing of actress Rebecca Schaeffer.

Third, if, as media critics claim, media violence is the, or even just a, prime cause of youth violence, we might expect to see similar rates of violence among all those exposed to similar amounts

of violence in the media, regardless of race, gender, region, economic status, or other demographic differences. Yet this is far from the case.

Consider the issue of race. Surveys show that while black and white families have access to similar commercial television coverage, white families are much more likely to subscribe to violent cable channels. Yet murder arrests among black youth are now 12 times higher than among white, non-Hispanic youth, and increasing rapidly. Are blacks genetically more susceptible to television violence than whites? Or could there be other reasons for this pattern—perhaps the 45 percent poverty rates and 60 percent unemployment rates among black teenagers?

And consider also the issue of gender. Girls watch as much violent TV as boys. Yet female adolescents show remarkably low and stable rates of violence. Over the last decade or so, murders by female teens (180 in 1983, 171 in 1991) stayed roughly the same, while murders by boys sky-

*Instead of
scapegoating
the media, we
should focus
our efforts on
more certain
causes of vio-
lence, such as
poverty and
child abuse.*

rocketed (1,476 in 1983, 3,435 in 1991). How do the media-blamers explain that?

Finally, consider the issue of locale. Kids see the same amount of violent TV all over, but many rural states show no increases in violence, while in Los Angeles, to take one example, homicide rates have skyrocketed.

The more media research claims are subjected to close scrutiny, the more their contradictions emerge. It can be shown that violent people do indeed patronize more violent media, just as it can be shown that that urban gang members wear baggy clothes. But no one argues that baggy clothes cause violence. The coexistence of media and real-life violence suffers from a confusion of cause and effect: is an affinity for violent media the result of abuse, poverty and anger, or is it a prime cause of the more violent behaviors that just happen to accompany those social conditions? In a 1991 study of teenage boys who listen to violent music, the University of Chicago's Jeffrey Arnett argues that "[r]ather than being the cause of recklessness and despair among adolescents, heavy metal music is a reflection of these [behaviors]."

The clamor over TV violence might be harmless were it not for the fact that media and legislative attention are rare, irreplaceable resources. Every minute devoted to thrashing over issues like violence in the media is one lost to addressing the accumulating, critical social problems that are much more crucial contributors to violence in the real world. In this regard, the media-violence crusade offers distressing evidence of the profound decline of liberalism as America's social conscience, and the rising appeal (even among progressives) of simplistic Reaganesque answers to problems that Reaganism multiplied many times over.

Virtually alone among progressives, columnist Carl T. Rowan has expressed outrage over the misplaced energies of those who have embraced the media crusade and its "escapism from the truth about what makes children (and their parents and grandparents) so violent." Writes Rowan: "I'm appalled that liberal Democrats ... are spreading the nonsensical notion that Americans will, to some meaningful degree, stop beating, raping and

murdering each other if we just censor what is on the tube or big screen. ... The politicians won't, or can't, deal with the real-life social problems that promote violence in America ... so they try to make TV programs and movies the scapegoats! How pathetic!"

Without question, media-violence critics are genuinely concerned about today's pandemic violence. As such, it should alarm them greatly to see policy-makers and the public so preoccupied with an easy-to-castigate media culprit linked by their research to, at most, a small part of the nation's violence—while the urgent social problems devastating a generation continue to lack even a semblance of redress. ◀

Mike Males is a freelance writer and a graduate student in Psychology at Occidental College in Los Angeles. The media watchdog group Project Censored named his May 20, 1992, *In These Times* report on the myths of the war on drugs as one of the year's top 10 underreported stories.

Hollywood shuffles

The campaign against television violence has had a bracing side effect: suddenly, Hollywood is gun-control crazy. The effect of having to acknowledge that television violence has any social consequences has perked up every producer's interest in far larger sources of violence in the society—such as guns. Maybe they'll eventually notice poverty and racism as well.

Still, just because television violence isn't the only cause of violence in the real world, we shouldn't claim that it doesn't matter at all. True, social science research on violence and television has all the flaws common to social science: lack of control groups, difficulty in sorting out independent variables, influencing the subject. That's why social scientists refuse to depend on one study to refute another. Instead, they look for trends and similar kinds of results.

After decades of research and hundreds of studies, there is a general consensus that watching violence on television is correlated—even accounting for other social variables like poverty—with increased aggressive behavior, fearfulness and depression. Yes, such correlations are affected by other powerful social factors, such as gender. But that doesn't mean they don't exist.

The data on violence and TV comes under fierce scrutiny by an industry eager to conduct its business with no strings attached. But you have to wonder about the intellectual honesty of those TV executives who claim that their shows have no impact—especially when the sales department is busy drumming up advertising business on the strength of the power of television to persuade and move to action.

Violence has been more thoroughly studied than any other behavior on television. These studies have been funded over the years, in part, by a Congress happy to play on the anxieties of a moralistic public. But the debate over violence may help to force the issue of television's social effects into public discussion—although, as Paul Simon (D-IL) has repeatedly warned the industry, the dangers of setting harmful First Amendment precedents are real.

TV violence, though, may be far less important to society than television's incessant dunning of commercial consciousness, its commodification of emotions, its exploitation of passion and desire. If you think measuring the social impact of violence in a way that the industry will acknowledge is hard, it pales before the challenge of assessing (credibly enough to take policy action) the social impact of TV's emotional exploitation.

—Pat Aufderheide



Van Damme made me do it

By David Futrelle

Michael Medved's polemic *Hollywood vs. America* begins with a disturbing statistic. In a 1989 *Time/CNN* survey, some 67 percent of Americans said they thought that movie violence was "mainly to blame" for real-life violence among teens. Medved takes the statistic as proof, of sorts, that the entertainment industry has become corrupted by a "sickness in the soul," spewing "feble-minded filth," and that, today, "the popular culture is unhealthy for children—and other living things."

But what disturbs me about the statistic he cites is that so many Americans have accepted an explanation for our social ills that is so patently false. Anyone looking for the causes of the rampant violence in American society would do better to stick to a familiar list: poverty, racism, parental violence, the ready accessibility of guns. It's hardly surprising that Medved—not so much a neoconservative as a neo-reactionary—doesn't get around to mentioning any of these causes of violence. The index to his book, tellingly, contains seven references to Guns N' Roses and none to gun control.

Medved is easy enough to dismiss. After all, his definition of "filth" is so broad as to be nonsensical: in addition to Medved's alliterative arguments against graphic violence, his book contains an impassioned critique of the subversive, anti-family agenda of *The Little Mermaid* and fervid denunciations of the "intense and embittered social criticism" in the animated mouse adventure *An American Tail 2: Fievel Goes West*. ("Can anyone doubt," Medved writes of his immigrant grandfather, "that his lifelong gratitude [toward the U.S.] was more representative of the immigrant experience than the disillusionment of Steven Spielberg's cartoon mice?")

Yet many progressives have accepted a similar symbolic explanation of America's contemporary woes. In a recent *Mother Jones* story on media violence, Carl M. Cannon notes with approval the conclusion of two social scientists that "watching violence on television is the single best predictor of violent or aggressive behavior later in life, ahead of

such commonly accepted factors as parents' behavior, poverty and race." But Cannon doesn't explain (much less evaluate) the methodology of the study, doesn't suggest how its authors came to such a startling and unbelievable conclusion. The study makes the point he wants it to, and that's good enough for him.

Cannon, like most who castigate television violence, is not content to stick with mere "science." "The anecdotal evidence is often more compelling than the scientific studies," he writes. "Ask any homicide cop from London to Los Angeles to Bangkok if television violence induces real-life violence and listen carefully to the cynical, knowing laugh."

Cannon cites the case of an 18-year-old Massachusetts youth who killed a college woman and himself: "When cops searched his room they found 90 horror movies, as well as a machete and goalie mask like those used by Jason, the grisly star of *Friday the 13th*." He cites the case of a Los Angeles man arrested for robbery and murder, who dressed like and evidently modeled himself after Freddy Krueger.

Obviously there is a "connection" between the movies and these crimes, just as there was a "connection" between the music of the Beatles and the Manson family murders. But to say that the movies "induced"—or were even major contributing factors to—these crimes is pushing the concept of "anecdotal evidence" well beyond its breaking point.

Cannon's central assumptions—and his rhetorical strategies—are strikingly reminiscent of those of Fredric Wertham, author of the 1954 sociological potboiler *Seduction of the Innocent*, an exaggerated diatribe against the putative effects of comic book violence upon the nation's young. Wertham was similarly reliant on anecdotal evidence, and similarly convinced that young people absorbed media images like sponges. "Edith was a delinquent girl of 14," one case study began. "For years her reading consisted of comic books. There was no question but that this girl lived under difficult social circumstances. But she was prevented from rising above them by the specific corruption of her character development by comic-book seduction. The woman in her had succumbed to Wonder Woman."

It is not unreasonable to insist that the influence of the media is more complicated than this. Few people will admit to being so easily swayed by what they see and hear and read—I've seen *Friday the 13th* and I haven't yet killed anyone—so why do we imagine that others react to images like Pavlovian dogs?

In fact, Freddy Krueger and Jean-Claude Van Damme may contribute less to our "cultural decay" than does the media's penchant for *covering up* systemic violence in the real world—by sanitizing the bloody effects of war (presenting the Gulf War as a Nintendo game); by ignoring the subtle and pervasive effects of economic violence in American slums and in the Third World. If we are concerned about real violence, this is where we should focus our attention.

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L A B O R

In for the long haul

Ron Carey's attempts to democratize the Teamsters are breathing new life into an old union.

By David Moberg

In his first year and a half in office, Teamsters President Ron Carey has given the badly tarnished union a shiny new image. Carey, elected by the union rank and file in a historic government-supervised vote, has made the union more democratic, more politically liberal and more imaginatively aggressive in fighting for its members. For many Teamster workers, however, the ultimate test of this image will be the substance of their contracts.

Carey is currently negotiating the union's pace-setting agreement covering 165,000 United Parcel Service (UPS) workers. With high expectations for the new leadership, members have okayed a nationwide strike, the company's first if it occurs.

Carey's brand of unionism is evident in the UPS talks. The union first surveyed members on what they wanted in the contract. Then Carey sent out regular

contract bulletins through the locals. When he realized that many local leaders weren't distributing the bulletins, he directly contacted all UPS workers to encourage them to demand the information.

Carey is thus not only reforming the union from the top down but encouraging membership involvement in reform from the bottom up. That is necessary because the old guard—some of whom resist Carey's initiatives—still controls much of the intermediate union apparatus, including local unions, joint councils, regional conferences and pension funds. Carey and his slate overwhelmingly control the international union executive board of the 1.4 million-member union.

Yet Carey's aggressive commitment to organizing new members and fighting recalcitrant employers has won over one-time opponents. In Rhode Island, for example, 81 Hasbro employees were locked out last December after refusing the toy company's ultimatum: accept massive

concessions in wages, benefits and hours or the factory will be moved to Mexico.

The union employed traditional tactics such as keeping trucks from crossing the picket line. But the Teamsters also employed a broad-based "corporate campaign," an increasingly common labor strategy that the union had never used before, launching an attack on Hasbro's corporate image. They took out ads featuring Hasbro's popular "Barney the Dinosaur" figure to show how the company was unfair to workers, and sent out leafleters in Barney costumes to toy stores. Hasbro gave up most of its demands and brought the workers back.

"I'm not a 'new Teamster,'" said Jim Boyajian, the longtime president of Local 251 in Providence that includes the Hasbro workers. "I'm an 'old Teamster.' We used to just put 'em out on strike and do it with muscle. Now it's a new concept. It's tremendous. They're going to boardrooms, banks. I didn't vote for Carey, but I'd support him next time."

Carey was elected because the federal government, in negotiating a deal to permit the old leaders to avoid racketeering prosecution, arranged for government-supervised direct election of top officers by the members. The government has removed hundreds of Teamster officials for misdeeds, including links to organized crime. But rank-and-file democracy has proven the most effective weapon against corruption. The election that brought Carey to power—the first time in history that Teamsters voted directly for their international leadership—cleaned out the top ranks of a union whose previous presidents had long been directly picked by the Cosa Nostra. Democracy also is the key to rejuvenating the union and restoring lost members and power.

When Carey took office, he cut top officials' salaries

(including his own) and got rid of perks and expensive trappings, like the union airplanes. He established the union's first ethical practices committees, with representation from members, local officials and international officials. He has put trustees in charge of 15 local unions or joint councils.

The government has continued to play its role through an Independent Review Board (IRB) with three members chosen by the union and the government. Carey has clashed with the IRB and the government-appointed independent administrator, Frederick B. Lacey, over what Carey sees as government interference in the union. Carey also objects to exorbitant legal expenses, such as Lacey's fees of \$385 an hour, that the union must pay. For their part, some government attorneys have questioned Carey's commitment to rooting out criminals.

Much of the controversy surrounds some local unions in which Carey appointed trustees after the government had removed corrupt officials. Carey slipped up early when he named William F. Genoese as trustee of a corrupt New York local, only to have Genoese removed later for having mob ties. Carey concedes it was a mistake, and has since retained an independent firm to check out backgrounds of all appointees. He argues that he's done as well as possible in a relatively short time: he doesn't have the investigative powers of the FBI and federal prosecutors, and he has acted to clean up tainted locals, often going beyond what the IRB recommended.

"I made it clear when I first came into office," Carey said. "The government should do what it's doing, get rid of corruption wherever it is—in the union, corporate America or on Wall Street—but I don't think the government knows how to run a union. Sure we've made some mistakes. Anyone would. Hopefully they'll be minimal and be on the basis of being overenthusiastic about getting rid of the past."

Susan Jennik, executive director of the Association for Union Democracy, an independent labor watchdog group, thinks that both Carey's trusteeships and the union's Ethical Practices Committees have not been particularly effective. "He's doing best where he's trying the most," she said. "He's putting effort into mobilizing members and into politics, contracts, NAFTA—the issues that mean the most to members. Unfortunately, he's not paying as much attention to cleaning up the union. I only wish he'd recognize the need for the government to finish up the job. I don't understand his resistance to continued government involvement."

Carey's prickly relationship with federal overseers in part reflects union suspicion of all intervention by a government that has been so hostile to unions. He wants the union's own ethical practices committee to replace the IRB.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), a rank-and-

file reform group whose longtime work laid the foundation for Carey's victory, wants the new president to promote democracy even more vigorously. "Some of our members in New York City want to work on corruption from the bottom, and they need more help from Carey," argues TDU organizer Ken Paff. "The change from the old guard in the Teamsters is a change from night to day, but

he could do more in areas of corruption. The key for Carey is to find ways to empower members to change locals, not to find ways to empower more policemen."

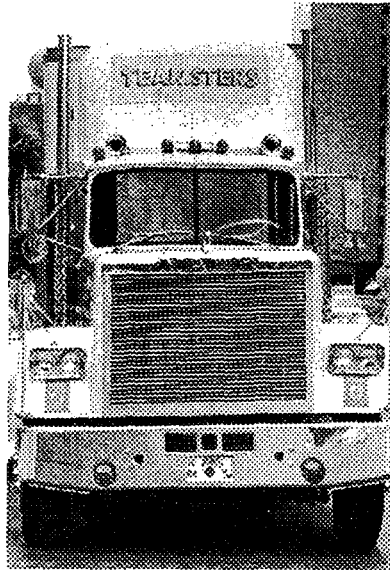
Though Carey still maintains cordial relations with TDU, he avoids taking sides in local elections. Since he was elected, the TDU and its allies have made some small gains (including forging a successful reform slate in Los Angeles with some old guard elements). But there has not been a wholesale revolution at the local level. Some local leaders have tacked with the winds of change and embraced Carey's program (or ironically even decided that the only way to oppose him was to be even more militant).

Despite his shortcomings, Carey has tried to involve members more in their union. He has promoted a set of model bylaws—including a groundbreaking provision that all stewards be elected—that some insurgents have used to reform their locals. In a dispute with Consolidated Freightways, he organized workers to participate in a successful employee-stockholder campaign. And the 500 permanently replaced strikers at Diamond Walnut in California—mainly women and minorities—have taken their call for a boycott across the country and to Europe, and have recently engaged in a hunger strike.

Members are also being recruited to supplement staff for new organizing drives. Although the union—whose ranks have declined by more than one-third since the late '70s—continues to lose members, the Teamsters' major coordinated organizing campaign at Pony Express has been a success, with victories in each of 29 elections held so far.

Carey and other leaders crisscross the country to address local union meetings, attend rallies and shake hands on truck-loading docks. "You never saw a president on the picket line before," says John Morris, the only international vice-president who did not support Carey. "You saw them on golf courses and at country clubs. He's a rank-and-file type guy. Even though I was not on his slate, I think he'll go down as a great president."

The story of Chicago's Local 705 illustrates the strange twists of Teamster reform. In the 1991 election, Daniel Ligurotis, the secretary-treasurer and thus the top officer of the local, was a leader of one of the two slates that opposed Carey. Rather than regard Ligurotis as a permanent enemy, Carey spoke last fall, at the invitation of Ligurotis, to the



local union. He also visited work sites and met with rank-and-file members. It was part of Carey's strategy to focus on union goals, seeking support from anyone—from TDU to Liguoritis—who agreed with his program.

Later, Liguoritis was removed by the IRB for embezzlement of union funds. Carey took the initiative to install a trustee, Ed Burke, Carey's former campaign manager and a veteran of democracy battles in the Mineworkers.

While serving as temporary trustee, Burke discovered that an organizing drive among 500 workers at a K-Mart in nearby Kankakee, Ill., was faltering. He quickly recruited 10 staff members, including two secretaries, and put them through a quick course in organizing. Then—in roughly a week's time—they visited 200 workers at home, a common strategy in other unions but rare in the Teamsters, and turned the tide for victory.

According to Carey's new communications director, veteran labor journalist Matt Witt, corruption in the union "also has to do with the sweetheart [or sell-out] contract, the grievance procedure that doesn't work, elections that aren't fairly run and the even more pervasive way that a union doesn't fight for members, doesn't involve the members. So when you communicate with members and involve them in political action and organizing campaigns, all of that is relevant to overcoming the corruption of spirit that took place in this union."

The gritty day-to-day reality of union business often focuses on handling members' grievances, but the Teamster grievance procedure has traditionally been closed to members or their stewards. In the back rooms, members have long complained, high-ranking Teamster officials have colluded with management, abandoned members' legitimate complaints and persecuted militants that neither the company nor the union liked.

In his first national bargaining, Carey opened up the grievance procedure with auto transport companies and blocked company efforts to shift work to non-union subsidiaries. But two old-guard leaders—who had been found guilty of tolerating mob influence and abusing members—tried to block these grievance reforms. Carey rallied support from workers, then charged the two with colluding with employers and sought to remove them.

At UPS, Carey is fighting not only for a more open grievance procedure but for a precedent-setting reform in corporate rules: any worker accused of breaking company rules would be considered innocent until proven guilty.

The union strike vote was precipitated by a company offer of a wage increase of only 35 cents an hour in each year of a six-year contract (about 2 percent per year), compared to 50 cents an hour in the last contract. But the issues go far beyond money. For the past decade, Teamsters bargainers permitted UPS to expand its part-time employees to about 55 percent of the unionized workforce, while cutting their wages. Full-timers make \$17.70 an hour, but part-timers start at \$8 and earn at most \$9.50. Essentially, the old guard financed decent wages and pensions for the politi-

cally more active full-timers by exploiting relatively transient part-timers. Now UPS wants to cut part-timers' beginning wages further and use non-union subcontractors to provide certain new services.

Carey adamantly opposes such subcontracting, and wants UPS either to expand full-time job opportunities or at least raise part-timers' pay. He also wants to increase pension contributions to permit earlier retirement. The union is also fighting for changes that would reduce worker stress and exposure to exhaust, the kind of workplace issues that members care about deeply but have long been ignored.

This commitment to rank-and-file activity has made the Teamsters a new force on the left in union and Democratic politics. Carey has been a forceful critic of the North American Free Trade Agreement, a proponent of Canadian-style national health insurance and an opponent of any compromise on legislation banning permanent replacement of strikers. Among cynical and overly cautious labor leaders, Carey is a refreshing "radical democrat," in the words of one of his staff, a union president who believes in rank-and-file mobilization. Earlier this year the union delivered 200,000 "Teamstergrams" to the White House backing Carey's legislative program.

Carey's innovations—including a lively new magazine open to controversy—have been greatly helped by a new staff that includes many of the best and most militant labor professionals from other progressive unions. But a number of his moves—such as the appointments of non-Teamsters and the elevation of rank-and-file members to top positions—have angered many veteran Teamster officials.

The union's ability to implement Carey's ambitious strategies is limited by its finances. Carey claims that the old guard was running the union at a deficit, diverting money from the strike fund for general expenses. Also, the combination of new militancy and expanded strike benefits, approved at the last convention, has added to financial pressures. Carey is "absolutely" convinced that there must be a special convention, probably early next year, to approve a dues increase. "That's what the good old boys are waiting for," Carey acknowledged. "That kind of battle I don't mind. These guys created [the problem] and keep trying to walk away from it."

When asked what he's achieved for the union, Carey says "respectability." He continues: "Members now have a general president working for them. I'm involved in all negotiations. Our communications and education are among the best in the country. Am I making any headway? A little bit, not a whole lot."

"Working people are being kicked in the ass, and nobody except the union speaks for working people," he said. "We've got to be the best we can be. We've got to prove to non-union people we can do the job. Democracy, unions, America—it all goes together. It's about working people in this country and a simple equation: nobody will look out for working people except a union that works in their interest and not for the top leadership." ◀

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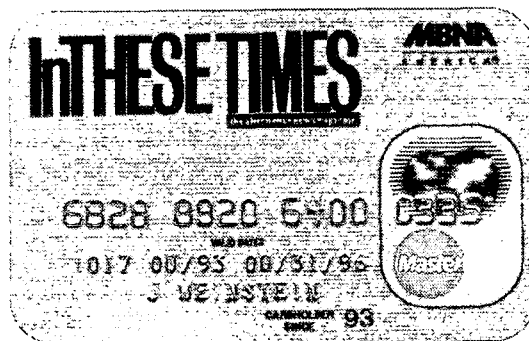
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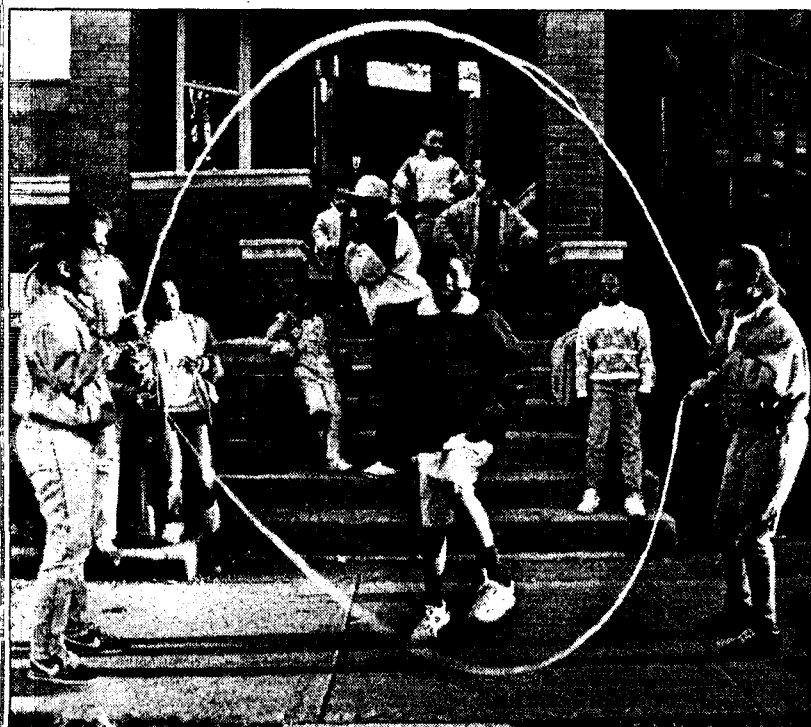
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POLITICS

Grand Old Parting

D

The best thing the Democrats have going for them is a deeply divided Republican Party.

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON D.C.

Democrats' hopes that the election of Bill Clinton would precipitate a new Democratic majority have already been dashed. Clinton's performance during his first year has more clearly resembled that of Jimmy Carter than of Franklin Roosevelt.

But even saddled with an unpopular president, the Democrats could retain control of statehouses and of Congress. The reason is the quality of the opposition.

Under Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, the Republicans showed fleeting signs of forging a new majority coalition. But by the 1992 vote, the party was hopelessly divided between two camps: the Christian zealots of Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan on one side, and the patrician Tories of George Bush and William Weld on the other. The only thing uniting these two

groups is the prospect of victory.

Sometimes that's enough. In the first nationally important elections this year—in Texas and Arkansas—Republicans were able to unite against Clinton and the Democrats. But in major elections this fall in Virginia and New Jersey, the GOP's underlying weaknesses have dramatically surfaced.

In Texas' by-election to fill the Senate seat vacated by Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen, both wings of the Republican Party united around pro-choice patrician Kay Bailey Hutchison. A stilted politician plagued by charges of corruption, Hutchison nevertheless rode pervasive anti-Clinton sentiment to the most lopsided Republican victory ever in a Texas race. She won 67 percent of the total vote and 82 percent of the white vote against appointed incumbent Bob Krueger.

The GOP posted a similar victory in the Arkansas special election in July to fill the lieutenant governor's post vacated when Jim Guy Tucker moved up to replace Clinton as governor. Arch-conservative Mike Huckabee, a broadcasting executive without any

political experience, became only the fourth Republican since Reconstruction to win state office. Huckabee, running against tax increases in Arkansas and Washington, defeated Clinton protégé Nate Coulter by 51 to 49 percent.

But Virginia and New Jersey look like a different story. In Virginia, Republicans had a good chance this year to regain the statehouse they lost in 1981. Sen. Chuck Robb and Gov. Doug Wilder, who led the Democrats' statewide resurgence in the '80s, have become locked in a bitter feud, splitting the party. Wilder is stepping down, because by law Virginia governors can only serve one term. But his growing unpopularity—as well as Clinton's—has clouded the chances of the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, Attorney General Mary Sue Terry.

Virginia Republicans have been divided themselves, however. The Christian conservatives of Robertson and Jerry Falwell are increasingly at odds with the upper-middle-class moderates who live in the suburbs that stretch from Washington, D.C., to Norfolk. In 1989, moderate Republican Marshall Coleman tried to square the circle by running as a conservative against Wilder. But Coleman's flip-flops ended up alienating both sides of the Virginia GOP.

This July, the Christian right showed its muscle at the state convention, when the party chose its nominees. Of the 13,100 delegates to the convention, 1,000 were members of Robertson's Christian Coalition. Nearly 5,000 were supporters of the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), a Christian right organization that favors home schooling as an alternative to the public schools.

The delegates chose former Rep. George Allen as the gubernatorial candidate over a suburban businessman. They

also selected Mike Farris as the candidate for lieutenant governor over a Jewish woman who worked for the Bush administration. Both Allen and Farris were candidates of the religious right, but Farris represents the most militant stream of Christian conservatism.

Farris, 41, got his start as the director of the Moral Majority in Washington state, where he railed against sex education and evolution, and led a campaign to remove *The Learning Tree*—the innocuous biography of black filmmaker Gordon Parks—from the Olympia high school curriculum. In 1983, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he became director of the HSLDA.

Farris calls the public schools “godless monstrosities” and declares, “I would respectfully suggest that those who argue that public education is necessary for the preservation of our democracy are wrong.” Farris also betrays a fanatic’s ignorance and superstition. In his campaign, for example, he charged that abortion was causing breast cancer.

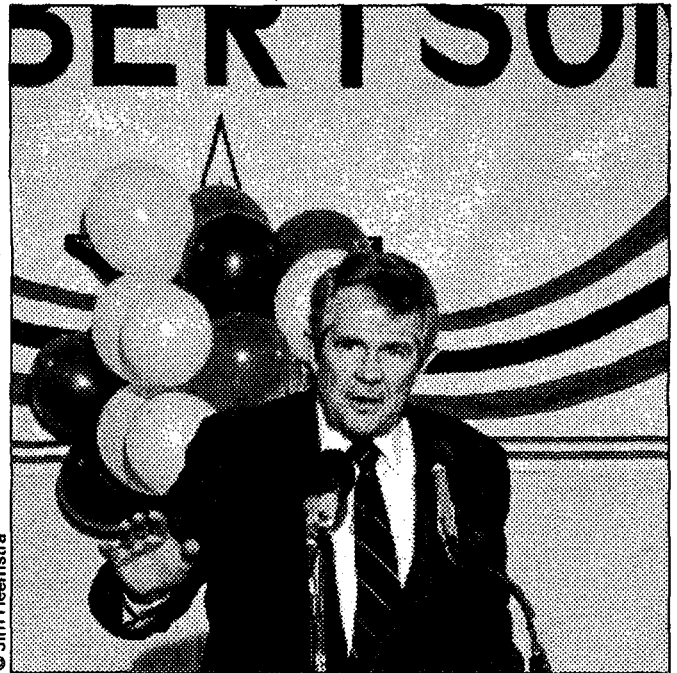
Allen has tried to distance himself from Farris without alienating his supporters, but both men have found themselves spurned by Virginia’s critical bloc of moderate Republicans and independents. Terry, the Democratic candidate, is way ahead of Allen in the polls and has raised 10 times more money than him.

Terry has also won endorsements from prominent Republican business leaders, who are drawn to her conservatism on labor issues—and distressed by the Republicans’ identification with the religious right. One GOP businessman said he would not vote for Allen because of Farris: “As much as George [Allen] would like to distance himself from some of [Farris’] views, they are on the same team.”

In New Jersey, Democratic Gov. Jim Florio infuriated voters by betraying a 1989 campaign promise not to raise taxes. Florio championed a massive tax increase during his first year, and pushed school reforms that redistributed money from wealthier to poorer districts. The governor has since backed away from his reforms—the funding gap between New Jersey’s poor and rich school districts has actually grown during his tenure—but the state’s suburban middle-class voters continue to dislike him. In 1990, New Jersey voters almost defeated Democratic Sen. Bill Bradley because he wouldn’t repudiate Florio, and, in 1991, they turned both statehouses over to Republican majorities.

No politician seems as ripe for defeat as Florio, yet he has an outside chance of winning re-election this November. Like Mary Sue Terry, Florio is the beneficiary of a divided Republican Party and a weak opponent. The Republicans nominated multimillionaire heiress Christine Todd Whitman, a former utilities commissioner who almost defeated Bradley in 1990. Whitman appeared decisive in the beginning of that campaign—besting Bradley in the first debate—but wilted by the end. Polls indicated that she would have been routed had the campaign lasted another week.

Whitman is a pro-choice George Bush Republican of inherited wealth who comes off well at country clubs, but not at bowling alleys. Her campaign so far has been a dis-



aster. During the primary, she admitted that she had not paid taxes on two servants, both of whom were undocumented workers. Then she confessed that she had not voted in a local school board race, because her children attend private schools.

**In Virginia,
Pat Robertson’s
Christian conservatives
are feuding with more
moderate Republicans.**

To attract working-class Democrats, Whitman hired Larry McCarthy, who produced the infamous Willie Horton ads in 1988 for an independent pro-Bush organization. Attacked by Florio and the New Jersey media for hiring McCarthy, Whitman blamed the ads on Bush media director Roger Ailes, who then blasted Whitman. McCarthy then resigned under fire and Whitman apologized to Ailes.

Like Marshall Coleman in Virginia, Whitman cannot bring together the moderate and conservative parts of the Republican Party. In June, Whitman made a campaign stop at a gun shop in Jersey City to denounce Florio’s ban on assault rifles—perhaps his most popular initiative. Challenged in debate by Florio, she backed off, saying she merely thought that the ban’s impact needed to be studied.

Florio has hired Clinton campaign manager James Carville to run a populist class-warfare campaign against Whitman. If Carville can keep the attention on Whitman and away from Florio, the New Jersey governor could be re-elected in spite of his unpopularity.

Democratic victories in Virginia and New Jersey—with their overwhelmingly suburban, middle-class electorates—will more than balance previous defeats in Texas and Arkansas. And if Florio, who betrayed his promise on taxes, can be re-elected, then any Democrat can be—even Bill Clinton.

B L A C K A M E R I C A

A dream redefined

The recent march on Washington marked a step away from black neo-nationalism.

By Salim Muwakkil

For some observers, the “30th Anniversary Mobilization” commemorating the August 1963 March on Washington appeared to be an extravagant exercise in nostalgia, despite its stated theme of “passing the torch” of leadership to another generation. Financed primarily by labor unions—as was the ’63 original—and dominated by veterans of the we-shall-overcome school of protest, the August 28 event was widely criticized as a replay of the same old song.

The routine rhetoric obscured some novel insights and convinced many observers that nothing of significance had occurred—a perception enhanced by the unfamiliarity of many critics with recent changes within the civil rights community. Though few in the media

noticed, the march was imbued with a new spirit of coalition-building.

One of the more prominent examples of this tendency—and one that had a profound effect on the character of the march—is the ascension of the Rev. Benjamin Chavis to the leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). As the group’s new executive director, Chavis has been deeply involved in aiding an incipient truce movement taking root among the nation’s largest street gangs. (See *In These Times*, April 5 and June 28.) He outlined that effort in his speech to the crowd.

And, at Chavis’ urging, Carl Upchurch, the executive director of the Ohio-based Council for Urban Peace and Justice and a spokesman for the truce effort, addressed the Lincoln Memorial crowd. Focusing such attention on the urban dispossessed is a new direction for the country’s oldest civil rights organization. During another Washington march earlier this year, the NAACP linked arms with gays and lesbians—another unprecedented alliance.

Also speaking of new alliances was the Rev. Jesse Jackson, president of the National Rainbow Coalition (NRC) and the District of

Columbia’s “shadow senator,” an elected but ceremonial post. Jackson, whose fealty to the Democratic Party has long frustrated many political independents, is making a lot of noise about third-party politics these days. In fact, there’s growing evidence that the two-time presidential candidate intends to link his NRC with Ross Perot’s United We Stand in the name of “interest politics.”

And while the thought of a Jackson-Perot coalition is enough to fuel dozens of intriguing political scenarios, the link is more important for what it represents as a tactical alteration.

Perot, who had fallen into disfavor among civil righters for a semantic faux pas made during the presidential campaign—in which he referred to African-Americans as “you people”—apparently has been rehabilitated. The spunky Texas billionaire was invited to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s (SCLC) annual convention, where he denounced the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and urged equality of funding for public education. Joseph Lowery, SCLC president, called Perot a “very good friend.”

This too is evidence that the civil rights community is distancing itself from a black exceptionalist approach that shuns alliances. The NAACP’s Chavis has loudly and frequently announced his intention to form more active coalitions with groups representing other identities and interests.

In one respect, this change in emphasis simply acknowledges the undeniable reality that, with a growing Latino

population, African-Americans soon will lose the distinction of being this country's largest minority and must begin building links with other groups. Moreover, this attitude represents a decided shift away from the neo-nationalism that has both invigorated and stymied the black freedom movement over the last decade.

The black protest dialectic contains both separatist and integrationist tendencies. The integrationist model, embodied most prominently by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and his civil rights cohorts, fell into disfavor among activists after King's 1968 assassination.

However, the coalitionist banner was carried on by adherents of Marxism-Leninism and remained influential in the movement. The Black Panthers, for example, professed allegiance to Marxist ideology and passionately espoused coalitions with other "Third World peoples" and like-minded whites—what Panthers called "mother country radicals."

Marxism's fall from grace has left the black movement without a compelling alternative to separatism. This ideological imbalance has crippled the movement and has led many activists toward the comforting illusions of tribe and myth—attracting a new generation of black youth weaned on the hip-hop nostrums of rap radicals. Much of the impetus for the gang truce movement, for instance, comes out of hip-hop culture.

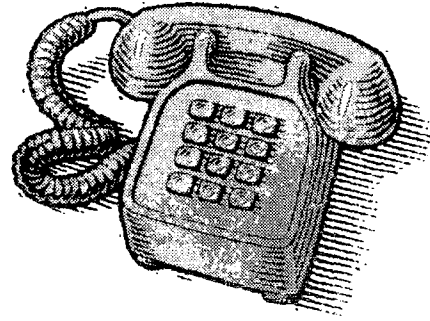
But the nationalists' emphasis on biological identity also has fertilized the growth of a crude kind of ethnic chauvinism. The genetic theology of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam—in which whites are portrayed as inherently satanic—occupies a dear place in hip-hop's heart. And on college campuses across the country, increasing numbers of black students are falling victim to the kind of devil-made-me-do-it demagoguery exemplified by Farrakhan and his imitators.

The biological determinism implicit in these arguments has virtually become an article of faith for many black organizers. In that context, the August 28 march and other events of the summer of '93 were attempts to challenge that stifling orthodoxy.

What's more, leaders of the commemoration were reaching out to new political horizons. "We've been this way too long. It's time for a political change," Jesse Jackson told the tens of thousands wilting in the Washington heat. He argued that African-Americans should begin looking beyond "the one party with two names," openly advocating independent political efforts.

The speakers' rostrum was heavy with labor leaders urging the defeat of NAFTA, but also included a wide spectrum of movement organizers and a smattering of celebrities. The crowd, estimated at between 75,000 and 100,000, was a disappointment for organizers who expected numbers near the 250,000 figure of the 1963 march. But the event's significance had little to do with the size of the throng it attracted.

The march was important for its attempt to, in Jackson's hackneyed phrase, "keep hope alive," and in its acknowledgement that the seeds for fruitful coalition await only diligent cultivation.



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E D U C A T I O N

English lessons

By Geoff Whitty

The media has been, of late, taking considerable interest in trans-Atlantic comparisons of education reform—though not necessarily for the right reasons. The *Sunday Times* brought American educational reformers John Chubb and Terry Moe over to Britain to give an outsider's assessment of the Conservative government's reforms. Their report has since been republished by the Brookings Institution as *A Lesson in School Reform from Great Britain*.

Meanwhile, the *New York Times* sent Susan Chira, its education correspondent, on the same journey. Interestingly, Chira offered her readers a more balanced evaluation of the English reforms than Chubb and Moe's enthusiastic endorsement of Conservative Party policy. To those of us who have been living through the reforms, the journalist's account rings truer.

Apart from the National Curriculum and the unworkable national testing arrangements—now totally discredited following a teachers' boycott—many of the English reforms conform to Chubb and Moe's prescription for America's schools.

Britain's 1988 Education Reform Act was designed to give schools greater autonomy and make them more responsive to market forces. Virtually all schools now have open enrollment rather than exclusive catchment areas (zoning), and they have been freed from the bureaucratic control of local education authorities (school districts) through a system of devolved budgets and site-based management.

But the more radical change, the one that particularly appeals to Chubb and Moe, is the opportunity given to parents to take a school out of school district control, to transform it into a free-standing, grant-maintained school funded by the central government. There are also 15 city technology colleges established by central government with business sponsorship, which are experimenting with new approaches to curriculum and school management. The emphasis on autonomy, specialization and choice is now to be extended to all schools by the 1993 Education Act.

Although John Chubb visited England during the debate preceding the passing of the 1988 Education

Reform Act, he claims that it had very little impact on his thinking at the time. However, he has since said that he now regards the English reforms as "pretty interesting" and hopes that his new report will "show Americans that this crazy notion of choosing schools is not all that crazy when you realize what's happening in other parts of the world."

The British experience is being touted as an example for the United States, a reason for U.S. school reformers to "think the unthinkable." Open enrollment is being used to justify choice policies, while charter schools, New American schools and the idea of withdrawing school districts' exclusive franchise to provide better education are being justified by reference to the British grant-maintained school and city technology college models.

But thinking the unthinkable is no substitute for sober evaluation. Studies of the implementation of the 1988 act show that the reality of autonomy and choice policies does not live up to the rhetoric. The British government claims that one aim of the reforms is to encourage the growth of different types of schools, responsive to the needs of their local communities. As such, they seem to respond to some of the criticisms of the old bureaucratic order, and thus to have a strong democratic appeal that goes far beyond the market fanatics of the new right. The possibility of community control has an obvious attraction for minority ethnic groups who have been ill-served by the old system. But it is increasingly being realized in Britain that the loss of power by locally elected education authorities is leading not so much to local community control as to increased control from central government.

One government minister has claimed that the reforms will produce "more and more specialized and differentiated schools ... without any one being regarded as inferior to the oth-

ers." But there is little evidence that they are helping to encourage diversity or to ensure equality of opportunity for all students. Rather, it is apparent that the emphasis on parental choice is further disadvantaging those unable to compete in the market and increasing the differences between popular and unpopular schools.

Schools, not parents, are doing the choosing. And the more advantaged schools are excluding students (and parents) who do not conform to their image of the "ideal" client. Grant-maintained schools have been particularly criticized for excluding less desirable students, including those with special educational needs. Those pupils are actually left with no choice. In the absence of accountability to a local school district, there are few sanctions to stop this from happening. These schools can therefore artificially enhance their image of "success," even though it is largely determined by their selection of students.

My colleague Stephen Ball points out how, below the various types of schools of choice that are being fostered by current policies, there is developing a third tier of "sink" schools that are unpopular and undersubscribed. But because other schools are becoming more selective rather than expanding, these sink schools are not being forced to close. They remain

open and are often the schools that the predominantly working-class and black populations of the inner cities attend. So these groups, which never attained an equitable share of educational resources under earlier policies, seem highly unlikely to benefit from the abandonment of planning in favor of the market.

Indeed, whatever the intentions of their sponsors, present policies seem likely to increase structural inequalities rather than to challenge them, while fostering the belief that school choice provides equal opportunities for all who wish to benefit from them. At most, a few members of disadvantaged groups will be sponsored out of schools at the bottom of the status hierarchy, either on grounds of exceptional ability or alternative definitions of merit.

The new policies are just a more sophisticated way of reproducing traditional distinctions between different types of schools and between the people who attend them. They seem more likely to produce greater differentiation between schools on a single scale of quality and esteem than the positive diversity for which some of their supporters hoped. To that extent, the reforms represent a continuity with a long history of inequality in English education rather than the promised breaking of the mold.

Geoff Whitty is chair of the Department of Policy Studies at the Institute of Education, University of London.

This article is part of a continuing series on education edited by Alex Molnar, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The series, "Notes from the Back of the Class," covers a wide range of education-related issues. Contributions from readers are welcome. Manuscripts of no more than 1,000 words should be sent to Alex Molnar, c/o In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

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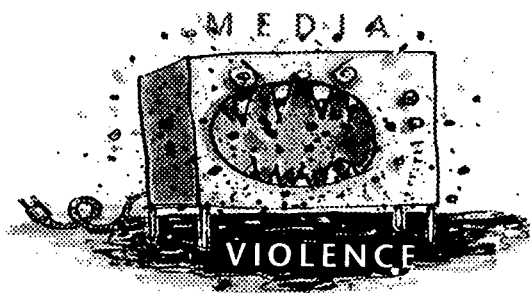
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The nightmare factory

N

ot a day goes by now without some responsible and upstanding citizen denouncing the pernicious influence of violence in the movies and television. It's true, I think, that physical brutality and graphic insults to the flesh are more common sights on the big and small screens today. But it also seems to me that much violent entertainment—if it can be called that—is as thoroughly engaged in conservative attempts at repression and control as most of our “moral guardians” are.

Consider *Kalifornia*, a movie that purports to explore the American flirtation with violence. It's ambitious, as suggested by the pretentious “k” of the title, which harks back to the '60s sobriquet “Amerika,” an insinuation that the American dream is a lie.

Kalifornia reeks of film-

Hollywood's obsession with violence is evidence that the American dream is dead.

By Pat Dowell

school stylishness and earnest symbolism. But it is also a yuppie-comeuppance movie, one that America's would-be censors of violence would surely welcome if they were smart enough to get the point. It reinforces their fears that dabbling in death-imagery—and particularly intellectualizing the issue of violence—brings violence to your doorstep, like sympathetic magic in anthropology textbooks.

In the film, a blocked writer with a contract to do a book about serial killers teams up with his artist-photographer girlfriend, whose constricted images of coupling have been rejected by galleries as “too graphic.” Brian and Carrie (soft David Duchovny and knife-edged Michelle Forbes) head cross-country in a gas-guzzling Continental aimed at the promised land of California. They plan to visit famous serial-killer sites; Carrie will photograph them, stimulating Brian to write about them.

Conveniently, the couple that answers Brian's ride-share ad turns out to be a serial killer and his waiflike, supernally dumb girlfriend. Early and Adele (Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis in amusing faux-naïf performances), a trailer-park parolee and a lunch-counter

waitress, are the working class gone to hell.

Before long, the blue highways are red with the blood of unfortunate bystanders. Ultimately, the smart young creative types, Brian and Carrie, are themselves prisoners. Brian, horrified that his writerly fantasies are now sharing a beer with him, nevertheless ends up, like any heroic wimp in a Western, coming to grips with his male, American birthright. He learns to use the violence he has seen only in words and pictures to save his life and “his woman.”

Kalifornia follows a very old tradition in American movies in this respect, and in another: it separates the men from the girls. Carrie, the photographer, is a modern independent woman who is ultimately reduced to the circumstances of the killer's groveling girlfriend, forced even to wear her white-trash sundress. She ends up handcuffed to a bed and raped. Later, though, she makes a comeback by clubbing her assailant with a mannequin's dismembered arm, disabling him with this fashion statement long enough for her boyfriend to take up the gun rather than the pen.

Kalifornia is a convoluted piece of pop culture, stylistically hip and superficially liberal-minded, yet underneath hiding a case of cultural fundamentalism of which even its writer and director (Tim Metcalfe and Dominic Sena) may not be aware. *True Romance*, on the other hand, dispenses with the pretense of redeeming social value and simply runs its outlaw lovers through the gauntlet of modern America, preserving them long enough to find that dream-promise of an idyllic family romp on the beach.

True Romance is another film-school fable, “a Bonnie

and Clyde for the '90s," the ads say. The film was written by Hollywood bad-boy wunderkind Quentin Tarantino of *Reservoir Dogs* fame and directed by the gifted hack Tony Scott (who made a ravishing vampire movie, *The Hunger*, before turning out soulless hits like *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Top Gun*). Less ambitious as commentary than *Kalifornia*, *True Romance* is more entertaining—and, paradoxically, more telling about American violence.

Christian Slater and Patricia Arquette, as Clarence and Alabama, are another working-class couple on a crime spree. (Judging by the way these two movies portray blue-collar types, the yuppies who run Hollywood seem mighty afraid of an angry proletariat.) Clarence and Alabama make their way across America (like the yups in *Kalifornia*, in a classic land barge—a subliminal marketing message for Detroit?) with a suitcase full of cocaine in the trunk.

Trying to unload the cocaine in L.A. runs them afoul of foolish, rich Hollywood folks, not to mention the pursuing gangsters who want it back. The movie's jaunty tone of low-life friskiness is punctuated by jaw-droppingly brutal beatings and graphic murders that furnish occasion for Tarantino's exuberant wit. It's gallows humor of a sort, full of trap-door moments when the solid platform of good times falls suddenly away to reveal death and emptiness. It's the uncertain journey so much of America is making now, rendered with expert exaggeration.

What's most surprising about *True Romance*, after the testosterone flood of *Reservoir Dogs*, is that Patricia Arquette's Alabama is the center of the movie. It is she who nurtures the story along and even gets the movie's most heroic scene, a bloody ordeal in a motel room with a torturer who admires her spirit. She saves the day at the end.

Nonetheless, like *Reservoir Dogs*, *True Romance* often seems the work of a movie nerd who's immoderately eager to prove himself one of the boys. Tarantino is so determined to certify his credentials in virile entertainment and join the pulp pantheon that you have to laugh at his ambition and his abundant, swaggering, larky talent.

He presents an interesting challenge to the current controversy over violence. Inspired by the work of kinetic Hong Kong directors such as John Woo (who made his own Hollywood debut this summer with the fitfully exciting Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicle, *Hard Target*), Tarantino writes movies that don't aim to "teach" us anything about the human condition. He uses violence to thrill and to represent intense emotions—

almost the way musical numbers once used to stand in for sexual communion—and he's good enough at it to unhinge critics and find a cult audience.

The difference between Tarantino and Woo, who presents even more of a challenge to the interpreters and detractors of movie violence, is that Woo finds the passion of human existence in the snuffing out of it. His is a lyrical art, expressed in an almost fetishistic use of guns, soaring body counts and rivers of blood. Woo is an artist whose work is deeply touching and mysterious (see particularly *The Killer* at your video store), whose vision is haunting and full of outrage and outrageousness. Not to mention that, as with *True Romance*, it's fun to watch.

Saying that you enjoy looking at the artful depiction of violence in a movie or on television—that you derive from it intellectual stimulation, moral insight, or just an exhilarating kick—is tantamount these days to saying that you enjoy taking drugs and that you would recommend them to toddlers. The anti-drug and the anti-violent entertainment movements have much in common. They are both panic reactions by a generation (my generation) confused about its role as parents and leaders. Drugs and media violence are easy distractions from the problems that actually rule our lives.

Mass-media fictions neither reflect nor determine the shape of our society. They coexist with our culture, gathering from the many hands they pass through all of the twisted loose threads of our troubles and joys. They exist as a parallel world, like dreams perhaps, where as creators and consumers, we continually rework and recreate our collective life, trying to get it right, offering warnings, models, rewards.

Violence has become more pervasive as a form of entertainment because the violent coercion that powers our society is transformed in movies and television into a collective convulsion of gunfire, smashed metal and sometimes nightmarish visions of the frailty of flesh. The result is everything from pro football to rap music to *Nightmare on Elm Street* to *Thelma and Louise*.

And the message of such entertainment is not what the sociologists say it is—that violence is an effective way to solve problems, that human life is cheap. The message is that America is no longer the land of promise, that fear and not opportunity drives us, that the American dream is dead. We feel it deep down, whether we're the unemployed middle-class professionals Barbara Ehrenreich wrote about in her prescient book *Fear of Falling*, or the young black men harassed by cops for driving too expensive a car, or the child who knows a beating is coming because she's been a bad girl.

The fear of poverty, of uninsured medical calamity, of prison, of random violence, of domestic brutality—that we're falling down and we can't get up—is the engine that keeps America running now. And this keeps us from finding common ground against the profiteers, even those who stir the media soup in which we drown. The more America tries to repress that sad revelation, the more luridly it will return to taunt us.



Photo by Ron Phillips

True Romance
Directed by Tony Scott

Kalifornia
Directed by Dominic Sena

IN PRINT

Bombs, away!

By Lane Fenrich

Near the end of her life, in 1946, Gertrude Stein was asked her opinion of the atomic bomb. She confessed she hadn't been able to take much of an interest. "What is the use if they really are as destructive as all that," she laconically wrote, "there is nothing left and if there is nothing there [is] nobody to be interested and nothing to be interested about? ... So you see the atomic [bomb] is not at all interesting, not any more interesting than any other machine. ... Sure it will destroy a lot and kill a lot, but it's the living that are interesting not the way of killing them."

Gertrude Stein is not the only person to have found the bomb a bore. Allan Winkler's *Life Under a Cloud*, despite its subtitle, "American anxiety about the atom," is as much about atomic codependency as it is about fear. Winkler, a history professor at Miami University in Ohio, finds this dynamic baffling. Indeed, he takes the bomb so seriously that he can't understand why "we" (postwar Americans, that is) haven't done more to eliminate it—why, in fact, so many of "us" learned not only to live with it but seemingly even to love it.

"Why, in the face of escalating stakes, have we failed to go further in addressing the real possibility of atomic doom?" Winkler asks. "And why have we been unable to bring about long-sought lasting change in the nation's commitment to nuclear development?" These are good questions. But unfortunately, after 200 pages chronicling anti-nuclear activism, the answers remain elusive.

Winkler's hypothesis, only slightly simplified, is that people just haven't been scared enough—that "the critics" haven't done enough to keep public attention focused on the nuclear peril. "Fear," he writes, "needs to be more sharply focused before it produces a response." Thus, anti-nuclear

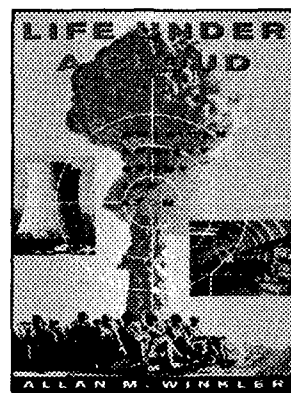
activism has waxed and waned as writers and activists from John Hersey and Nevil Shute to Helen Caldicott and Jonathan Schell have made Americans conscious of the threats to their own well-being. If only that sense of threat could have been sustained, Winkler suggests, swords might have been beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks and so on.

From the outset, *Life Under a Cloud* tells two stories: that of military and civilian decision-makers determined that the U.S. stay in the lead of the nuclear race, and that of numerous scientists, journalists and ordinary citizens haunted by the power of the atom and determined to do something about it. In fact, as Winkler acknowledges, the two groups often overlapped. "Members knew one another, spoke to one another and sought to persuade one another as they interacted over time," he notes.

And yet, notwithstanding such interactions, the two groups remained fundamentally at odds. "Single-minded about promoting strategic security, whatever the cost," Winkler argues, officeholders "maintained their own commitment to proceed with nuclear development and thus avoided a searching re-examination of American policy." Only in the face of overwhelming public pressure did politicians budge from their monomaniacal devotion to atomic weaponry—and then by making only those concessions necessary to quell the outcry, whether that meant embracing civilian control, moving testing underground, or committing unprecedented resources to the development of an entirely hypothetical (and deceptively advertised) space shield.

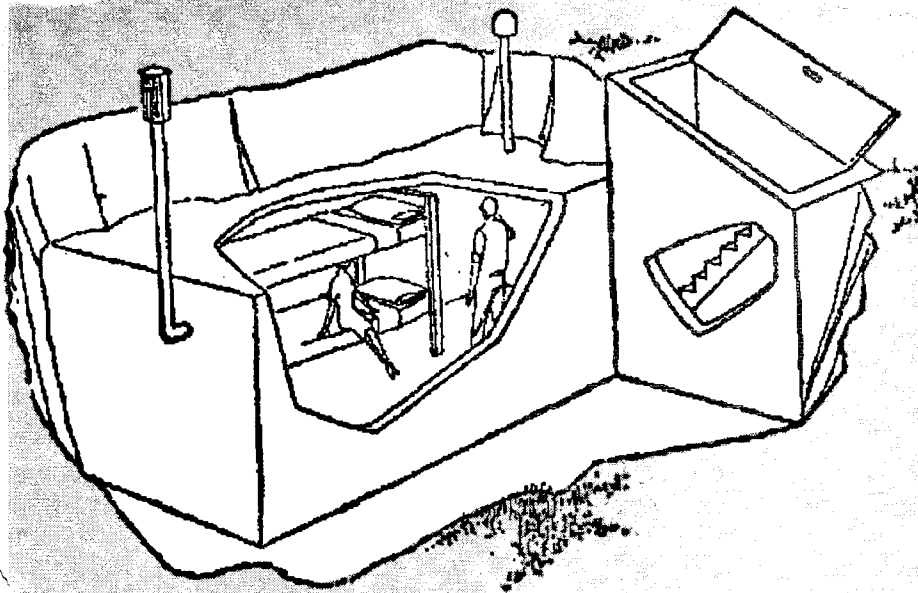
In the late '50s, for example, waves of what Winkler calls a "fear of fallout" rolled across the American cultural landscape. As the U.S., the Soviet Union and their nuclear partners indulged in unlimited nuclear testing, ordinary Americans grew worried that they—and, more to the point, their children—were at risk. Thanks to government publicity, millions followed the plight of the Rongelap islanders and Japanese fishermen poisoned by fallout from the much-touted "Bravo" explosion of 1954, events that made "radiation sickness" a permanent part of the nation's vocabulary. As comic songwriter Tom Lehrer later put it, the fate of the fallout victims was enough to convince some that "When the air becomes uranious, we will all go simultaneous. ... Yes, we will all go together when we go."

It was not until later in the decade, however, that studies documenting rising levels of strontium-90 (a highly toxic by-product of uranium fission)



Life Under a Cloud:
American Anxiety about
the Atom

By Allan M. Winkler
Oxford University Press
336 pp., \$27.50



UNDERGROUND REINFORCED CONCRETE SHELTER
Materials cost for family of six: \$700 if built as an addition to the basement of a home under construction; otherwise about \$1,500, depending on the type of entrance used.

in milk and in babies' teeth brought the threat home, triggering a public outcry that, Winkler suggests, forced the Eisenhower administration to suspend nuclear testing. Which is, of course, the moral of the story: get the information to the people and the bomb will be history.

The problem, of course, is that it just isn't that simple. Timing alone, for example, suggests that Cold War politics—and not public opinion—forced Eisenhower to accept a testing moratorium. The U.S. suspended testing only after the USSR unilaterally announced in March 1958 that it was taking such action. However important public opinion may have been in shaping American policy, the causal connections are more complicated than Winkler allows.

Moreover, as Winkler's own account makes all too clear, fear of the bomb has reached near-panic proportions numerous times in the postwar decades. Each time, however, anxiety gave way to accommodation—if not exactly comfort—as an unnerved public weighed the prospect of living *with* nuclear weapons against that of living *without* them.

However much we might wish they had, people did not see the bomb solely in terms of wrecked cities and catastrophic loss of life. Indeed, many saw in it a guarantee of peace: a weapon they hoped would make war too destructive to fight. Others clung to it as the last, best means with which to oppose the communist bogey. Still others dreamed of the possible "ripple effects" of weapons research—fusion-powered cars, electricity too cheap to meter—technologies they hoped would usher in a new age of security

and material plenty.

The point is not just that the bomb was many things to many people but that "awareness" was not, as Winkler would have it, a discrete, one-dimensional "key to potential change." Awareness of what? Of possible global annihilation? Of relative strategic advantage in the Cold War? Of the potential wonders of technology?

As Ronald Reagan—or at least his speechwriters—understood with devastating clarity, the bomb is as potent a psychological and cultural force as it is a weapon, entering popular and political discourse in unexpected and often wildly contradictory ways. Reagan, you will recall, pushed through the largest peacetime arms buildup in American history at a moment of what can only be called extreme awareness of the

potential for nuclear annihilation.

Even as a well-organized grass-roots movement mobilized opinion in support of a nuclear freeze, Reagan won the day by invoking the specter of the "evil empire" and nostalgia for American "greatness," for a day when Americans walked tall, talked loudly and, most importantly, felt good about themselves. Forget Vietnam, Watergate, Carter, the Ayatollah and all that, Reagan intoned, America is back—and we're armed.

In one way, of course, the turmoil of the early Reagan years illustrates Winkler's point nicely: anti-nuclear sentiment swelled as Americans perceived themselves to be in danger. And yet that sense of danger is itself in need of closer examination. Different Americans have defined danger in radically divergent ways at different times. What counts as worth worrying about? Is it possible to alter the calculus so that incinerated Asians count, too, so that Hiroshima means as much as Kansas City?

Winkler doesn't say, leaving virtually uncharted the political and cultural terrain of which missile sites and disarmament encampments have been just a part. And in the end, it is that lack of political perspective that most handicaps the book—and that makes one think Gertrude Stein may have been right after all. ◀

Lane Fenrich teaches history at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Imagining Holocaust: Mass Death and American Consciousness Since the Second World War* (forthcoming).

IN MEMORIAM

E.P. Thompson

By Bryan Palmer

Edward Palmer (E.P.) Thompson, one of the world's most influential social historians and a major international figure in the struggle for world peace and nuclear disarmament, died in his home near Worcester, England, on Saturday, August 28.

Born in 1924, Thompson led a life of embattled engagement. His father was an English Methodist missionary to India, a gentle man fiercely loyal to Gandhi, Nehru and the independence movement. His mother was a tough-minded American liberal.

Thompson grew up critical of state authority and its imperialist aggressions. When an older brother, Frank, joined the British Communist Party in 1939, he eased the way for Edward to embrace Marxism. Both Thompsons fought fascism, Edward as a tank commander in northern Africa and Europe, Frank as a British officer who worked closely with the partisan movements of southern Europe. Executed by Bulgarian fascists in 1944, Frank would be remembered as a national hero in Yugoslavia.

Barely 20 years old, Edward thus experienced the euphoria of the Popular Front days. Wherever he looked he could see the sacrifice of men and women willing to lay down their lives for human betterment, the comradeship of a culture of possibility.

Aligned with his wife Dorothy, Edward carried the commitments of this period into the postwar years. Finishing up studies at Cambridge, he entered into adult education at Leeds. Active in the Yorkshire district committee of the CP, Thompson participated in the Communist Party Historians' Group, where Dorothy figured prominently, along with E.J. Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill and Rodney Hilton.

In this context, Thompson became both a social historian and a dissident communist, increasingly estranged from Stal-

inism. Central to both developments was what he called "The Place of Choice," the title of a poem he penned in Halifax in 1950:

Whatever evil there is
I declare was first let in
By timid men with candles

...
Man is what he has made,

...
Changes the world, and then
Transfigured by his deeds,
Changes necessity,
Becoming whole and free.

This increasing understanding of human agency and the *making* of alternatives—to both the failures and crimes of capitalism and degenerating "socialism"—was at the core of Thompson's work in the '50s and early '60s.

Working on a biography of the Victorian socialist, poet and artist William Morris, Thompson was brought face-to-face with the revolutionary possibilities of romanticism. Originally published in 1955, Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* was a muffled attempt to address the Communist International's failures, though it rationalized support for the Soviet Union and its allies besieged by McCarthyism and the Cold War. Publicly, Thompson seemed constrained. But within the Party, his increasingly vocal opposition went so far as co-editing with John Saville a mimeographed journal of dissent.

This ambivalence shattered in 1956, when revelations of Stalin's terror broke throughout the world, and tanks rolled into Budapest to crush the Hungarian uprising. Thompson and others then left the CP. Hoping to build a new left, Thompson was central in putting out a dissident communist journal, the *New Reasoner*. He also joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and played an important role in founding the *New Left Review*.

Eventually displaced from the *Review* by a Perry Anderson-led putsch, Thompson moved deeper into his historical research and writing. His monumental *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) marked the emergence of a new social history in which human subjectivity and agency could be recognized as important determinants of history's dynamic. The book set the stage for a new understanding of the role of culture in class formation.

In the late '60s and early '70s, Thompson traced these concerns back into the 18th century. His articles on time and work-discipline and the moral economy of the English crowd, published in *Past & Present*, are still widely influential. This historical work was extended as Thompson moved out of adult education to establish the Center for the Study of Social History at Warwick University.

Throughout these years Thompson was somewhat at odds with a new left that he no doubt regarded as undisci-

plined in its political activity and uncharitable in its seeming dismissal of the experience of dissident communists of the Popular Front era.

As the politics of international youth revolt unfolded into the '60s, Thompson worked with Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams to produce a strong left condemnation of the Labor government, editing *The May Day Manifesto 1968*. When Warwick's administration was discovered to have kept "security" files on David Montgomery, a visiting professor of American working-class history, Thompson united with students to produce an exposé of the "business university."

Shortly thereafter, Thompson resigned from his Warwick post, intending to devote his time to his writing. But his political engagements regularly moved him off the academic path. His political writing in the '70s—collected together in a 1980 compilation, *Writing by Candlelight*, and addressing topics as diverse as the 1972 miners' strike and the rise of the secret state—focused on the preservation of citizens' rights within a "democratic" order. Often skirting the concerns of orthodox Marxism, these writings adopted the tone not so much of Morris as of Tom Paine and William Cobbett.

In *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (1978), however, Thompson attempted to clarify what was positive within Marxism as well as what had long been silenced—taking aim at the fashionable structural Marxism of Louis Althusser, pillorying its abstractions and bludgeoning its unrepentant relation to Stalinism.

Thompson was redefining himself. Though retaining from Marxism a set of central questions and analytical methods, Thompson conceived of himself less and less in terms of traditional Marxism and more and more in terms of a moral agenda that turned on opposition to power and its abuses. "We need, in some new form," he would write in *The Nation* in 1983, "a 'Wobbly' vocabulary of mutual aid and of plain duty to each other in the face of power."

At the end of the '70s, power's most obscene abuse appeared to threaten nuclear annihilation. Between 1979-83, Thompson penned dozens of articles on nuclear disarmament, edited and wrote a series of books on the Cold War and its hot nuclear arsenals, helped to revive the British CND, and maintained connections with clandestine bodies of protesters behind the Iron Curtain. His 1979 CND pamphlet, *Protest and Survive*, and his 1982 *Beyond the Cold War* became central texts of an eclectic movement. In these years, Thompson was making history rather than writing it, taking on the stature of Bertrand Russell in the '50s.



But he paid a price for this political choice. Sleeping and eating irregularly, investing his nights in meeting writing deadlines and his days in the routine of an underfunded, understaffed movement: all this took its toll.

Thompson's bodily constitution began to fail. He was assailed by a virus he couldn't shake, battled colitis, was susceptible to pneumonia, lost partial use of his lungs, was frequently hospitalized and constantly medicated, and probably had a brush with Legionnaires' disease. This went on for years, culminating in the heart problems of his last years.

As the threat of nuclear holocaust diminished in the late '80s, Thompson turned back to the earlier work he had neglected. In many areas he had missed a decade of scholarship, which he struggled to master. To earn much-needed income he and Dorothy (whose university job at Birmingham sustained their domestic economy) took up teaching posts in Canada and the United States.

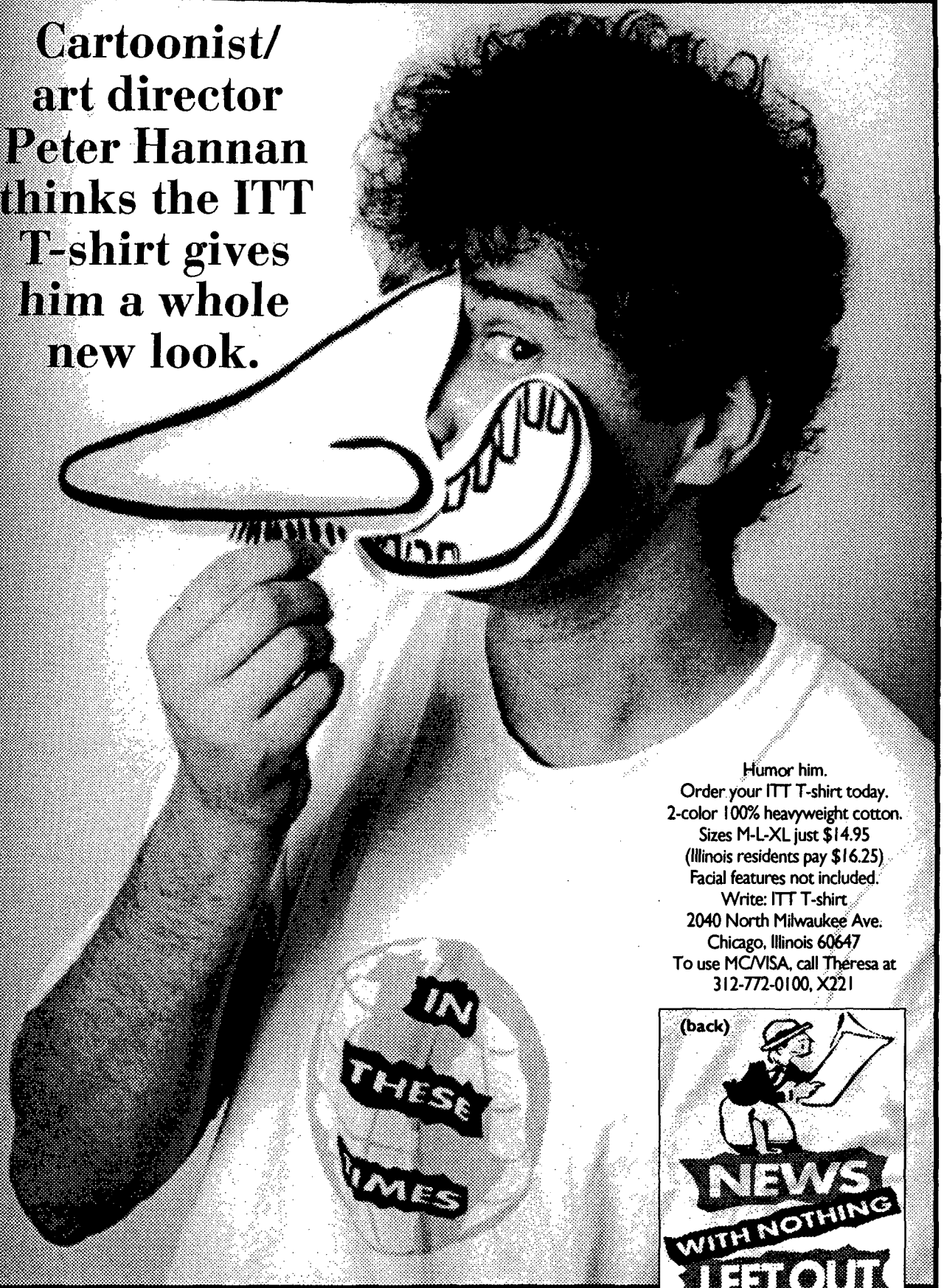
First off the press was a surprising Swiftian satire, *The Sykaos Papers* (1988), a plea for poetry and laughter as alternatives to the awesome folly of nuclear holocaust. His essays on 18th-century English popular culture, *Customs in Common*, finally appeared in 1991, while an account of his father's relations in India was published earlier this year; a study of William Blake is forthcoming.

Remembering Edward Thompson, whatever differences one has with his political history and trajectory, is a way of keeping alive the possibility of protest and opposition. Whatever his movement away from Marxism, he never embraced the message of the market. Capitalism's record, he always knew, was a continuous failure to address, let alone meet, fundamental human needs.

Edward Thompson is survived by his wife Dorothy, their daughter Kate and sons Mark and Ben. His legacy is a lifetime of commitment to humankind and international solidarity, and a tone of political engagement that is registered in words and deeds of *refusal*. We need to understand and remember his refusals, and to reclaim that tone in the closing years of this century. Let us shed tears for Edward, but let us make sure that they water the causes for which he fought. ◀

Bryan Palmer teaches social history at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. He is the author of *The Making of E.P. Thompson* (New Hogtown Press).

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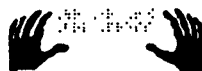
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a better woman doesn't come along. And besides, all your teeth are missing, so my penis should fit nicely in your mouth—so nicely, in fact, that I should be able to rest my scrotum on your tonsils. Then I'll hit you, do it doggie-style, to show you how I and my friends at this record label acquire sex.)

Woman-hating is hardly a new thing in white male America. But never has this hatred been so manifestly violent in the popular music industry, which has suddenly found allies in an unlikely place: the (now glamorized) ghetto created through the abuses of slavery, segregation and racism—allies with names like Onyx and Dr. Dre. Who better to be a hater than someone who has himself been hated?

We're in the throes of the uptown backlash, where females abandon their pride for love like '50s flygirl Doris Day, and homies wear the piece and the pants.

Who's going to fight back on this one? Non-black women and men can be written off immediately as unfunky, ridiculous and racist—"it's a black thing, you wouldn't understand." Feminists of all races are too easily dismissed as out of the mainstream. And, too often, efforts to empower women within the black community are seen as secondary to the "real" struggle of empowering the male.

But somebody's got to do it. Better me than Tipper Gore, right? Black and Hispanic men have been emasculated by the culture of slavery and segregation, but there is someone who makes less money than they do, someone who is repre-

sented less in the media than they are, someone who bears the brunt of this emasculated anger: women—and especially women of color.

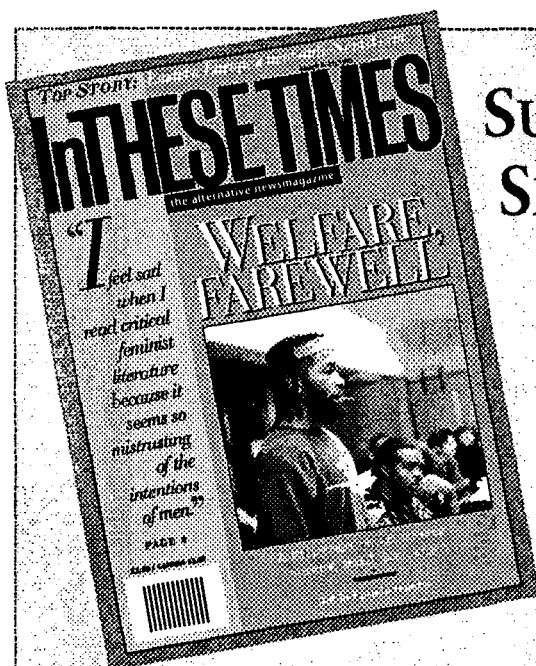
Culture is a class issue, an education issue, a money issue. The underclass continues to exist in a violent world of ignorance and low self-esteem. Glorifying this cultural illness, embracing it, writing it up in magazines and newspapers in a patronizingly approving manner, is only going to make the matter worse. How can glamorizing the life of women-beating gangster rapists be so glibly condoned when one in four black men is in prison, and more young black men go to jail than to college?

In this country, a woman is beaten every 15 seconds by her companion. Every one and a half hours in New York City a woman is beaten badly enough by her spouse to seek shelter and outside assistance. Four thousand women die every year from a male companion "putting the smack down" on them.

It ain't about being a black thing we wouldn't understand, or a Hispanic thing, or a white thing. It's about the future of a whole generation. It's about the dignity of all human beings. It's about women's lives.

Peace. I'm outta here.

Alisa L. Valdés has written for the *Village Voice* and the *Boston Globe*. She is at work on a book about women in contemporary jazz.



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Uptown backlash

By Alisa L. Valdés

Over the Fourth of July weekend in New York City, a 14-year-old girl was sexually assaulted by five men in a public swimming pool. Though every news report made note of the fact that her mother (and about 1,300 other people) watched as it happened, only a handful chose to articulate the most significant detail: that the young men were chanting the lyrics to a popular rap song as they did it.

I wasn't surprised. For the last year, concurrent with the heavy crossover of rap and "new jack swing" onto the top-40 radio airwaves, a day doesn't go by where I can walk through the streets of New York without having the crude lyrics of a sexist rap song jabbered at me by a young man on a corner or in a car.

I don't hate rap; in fact, I'm a musician and a hip-hop dance teacher. I used to cop my moves from Monie Love videos, used to tilt my Chicago Bulls cap sideways and wear big hoop earrings. I was fly. But now I'm starting to get scared, really scared.

That commercialized hip hop and rap have been embraced by mainstream America is no surprise. What is a surprise—and one that deserves some serious analysis—is the proliferation of top-

40 gendercide, the blatant violence against women that is riding the airwaves all across this country, protected from scrutiny by the white guilt implied in the "black music" label.

Though it's arguable that on the whole our society has progressed linguistically and musically in the last century mostly because of African-American improvisation in jazz, slang, and now through the poetry of rap, it is the profit margin, not artistic admiration, that has led the music industry to embrace "black music."

What, though, is being sung to young America? For women, especially young ones, the answer is terrifying. Here's my evidence, taken from an hour of top-40 radio in New York City one summer afternoon:

A pious Mary J. Blige reminisces on the love she had and sings, "I'll sacrifice my time/ to make sure you're satisfied"; a few songs later a rapper answers in a deep voice: "If the sex is good then take two ... I might explode all over you ... will you be my concubine?"

The "all-girl" vocal trio Jade pleads, "Don't walk away boy, I'll be right here for you" amid the sampled sounds of female orgasm; meanwhile, Jamaican rapper Mad Cobra admonishes his girlfriend for saying "I'd rather wait," by saying, "Girl, I can't wait no more ... for the injection ... receive what I give."

SWV sings, in their little-girl voices, "Your love's so sweet, it knocks me right off my feet." Onyx answers, "I come to beat 'em, to feed 'em and mistreat 'em, so what if that I'm cheatin'?" over a chorus of men shouting "Slam ... let the boys be boys." And Dr. Dre gets romantic: "If it ain't another ho' that I gotta get with/ gap teef in your mouth so my gas gotta fit ... with my sack on your tonsils ... I'm gonna smack your ass from the backside, to show you how Def Row pull off that hoop ride." (Translation: I'll sleep with you if

Continued on page 39

